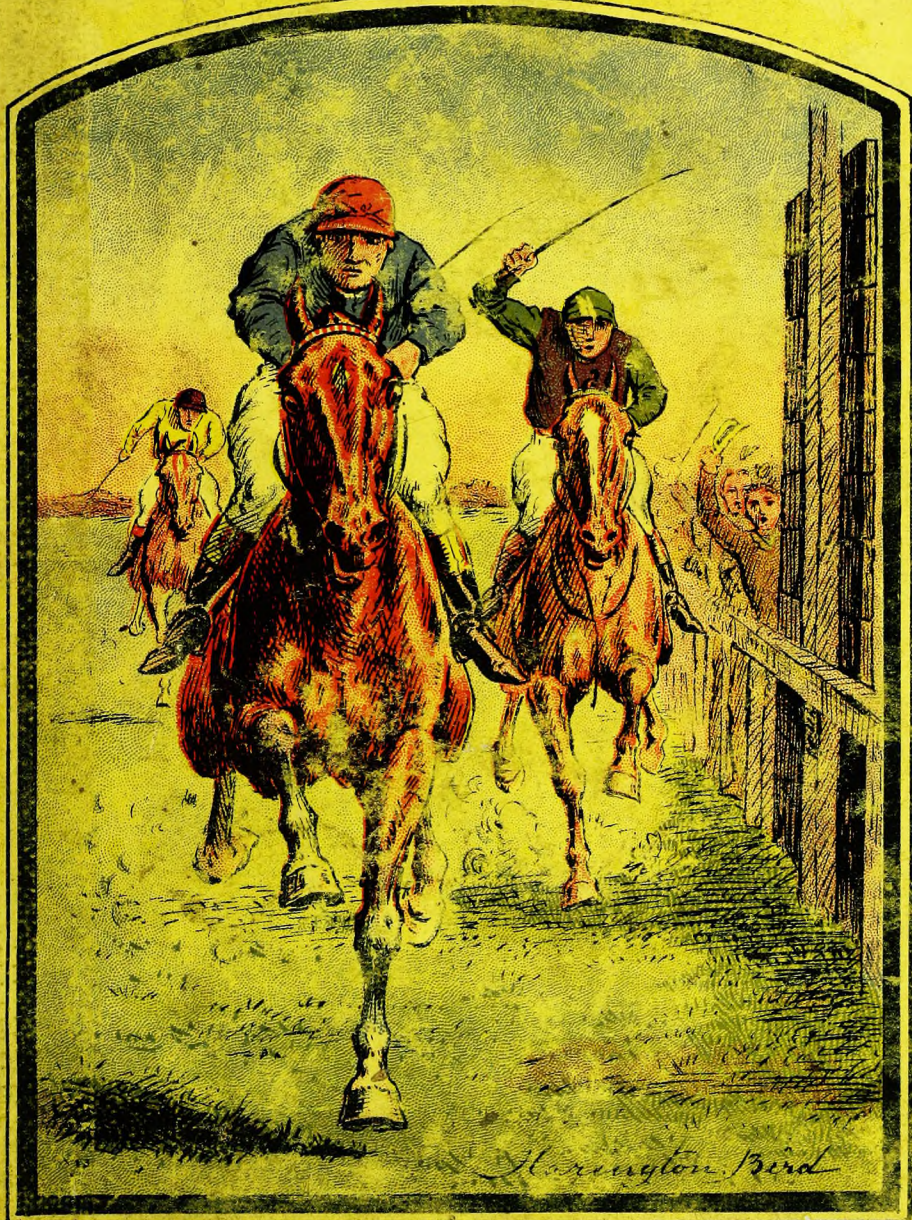




# BRED IN THE BUSH

BY  
NAT GOULD





A Journal  
for Country  
Gentlemen  
and others  
interested in  
Field Sports  
and . . .  
Pastimes.

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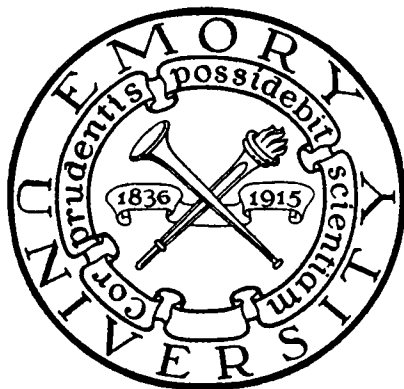
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# BRED IN THE BUSH

BY

NAT GOULD

AUTHOR OF "A RACECOURSE TRAGEDY," "KING OF THE RANGES,"  
"RAYMOND'S RIDE," ETC., ETC.

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# BRED IN THE BUSH



## CHAPTER FIRST

## *TAMING A COLT*

"COME down, I tell ye! come down off him, I tell ye! Was there ever such a little varmint in all this world? She'll be the death of me, she will. Come down afore ye break yer neck."

Barry Green shook his fist at the delinquent, a merry, mischievous, laughing girl, who was waging a tough battle with an intractable horse, that threatened at every moment to dislodge her.

"Come down, Miss Essie. He'll do for ye; he's a brute when his temper's up. Who let ye mount him?"

"It's all right, Barry!" she shouted; "he's giving in. I'll master him. He got the better of you, but he has no chance with me."

"So he did; so he did," said Barry; "and he'll damage ye as sure as fate. Come down off him, will ye?"

"How can I?" she said, laughing as she plunged, and then swerved sharply.

This movement would have unseated many a skilful rider, but Essie Holt sat firmly in the saddle. She was bred and born in the bush, and had been accustomed to the saddle from a very early age; in fact, she learned to ride almost as soon as she managed to walk.

Barry Green was a privileged person, who had been employed at Glengarry station ever since he was a boy, and his principal occupation appeared to be a futile endeavour to keep Miss Essie out of mischief. He scolded and admired her at the same time, and was her most devoted slave. He was about thirty years of age, and still possessed a child-like innocence which amused people younger than himself and astonished his elders. Many a time he had acted as nurse to Miss Essie, and as a mere child she liked him and trusted him, and her feelings had not changed as she grew older. A curious fellow, Barry Green—a strange mixture of dry humour and pathos, a silent, observant man, a student of Nature, human and otherwise. His whole life had been spent in the bush and at Glengarry station.

When a child of five years he had been abandoned by his father; his mother he never knew. His first impressions of life clung to him still. When he was of an age to think for himself, and this commenced at an early period, he wondered why he had been sent into the world, and he was still in ignorance at the age of thirty. His ideas of life were limited. Barry

had never seen a railway train, or ships, or vast steamers, or any of the great creations of man which have done so much to hurry on civilisation and national developments, nor was he aware of the growth of the huge centres of toil and labour which he heard called cities.

His horizon had always been bounded by endless plains, which gradually vanished as they mingled with the sky, and were lost in the infinite. Miles upon miles of trackless lands had been his home, and for months at a time he never heard a human voice. At Glengarry station, in the wilds of Northern Queensland, he found a home, and through the kindness of Edwin Holt had been permitted to live his own life, and became practically the slave of Essie, his young mistress. His position was no sinecure, for she was a wilful, headstrong young lady, who knew no fear, and was possessed of a courage which was the admiration of all the hands at Glengarry. Her hairbreadth escapes had been numerous; but the many risks she ran did not deter her from taking others.

She was a fearless, skilful rider, and all she knew of horsemanship she learned from Barry Green.

"If ye don't come down I'll fetch ye," shouted Barry.

A hearty laugh greeted his threat, and the girl brought down her whip with a stinging cut against the horse's flank.

She was endeavouring to tame a half-bred colt which had not long been taught that subjection to

man, and not roaming in a wild state about the country, was the duty of his life. This he savagely resented, and frequent outbursts of temper proclaimed he had not been subjugated. He was no horse for a young girl to ride, at least any ordinary girl ; but Miss Essie was not ordinary. She did many extraordinary things, and some of her feats in the saddle were little short of the marvellous.

"Come along, Barry, fetch me," she cried gaily, the colt still plunging violently, resenting the cut with the whip.

He knew it was useless to interfere, so made the best of the situation. He looked a curious figure as he leaned against the stack-yard gate and watched her. He was a small man in every way. His height was only just over five feet ; he had a small body, but possessed far more strength than would have been imagined to look at him, as some much bigger men had found to their cost. His hands and feet were small and well-shaped, and his arms were as strong as steel. His broad forehead and keen eyes denoted more than average intelligence, and his mouth was firmly set, indicating determination. What education he had was due to his own exertions, and the assistance of Miss Essie ; and it was amusing to see her acting the part of school-mistress to him. Her own learning was not profound, but she had managed to obtain useful knowledge from a governess, who had almost died of loneliness during her stay at Glengarry. All she had contrived to learn she strove to impart to Barry, and

succeeded fairly well, although he had a way of his own of speaking, when excited, which was not entirely orthodox. He was, however, gradually becoming more civilised, so Miss Essie affirmed, and she had hopes of polishing him off in time.

The colt was determined ; so was his rider, and it was wonderful to notice her powers of endurance. Essie Holt was not accustomed to give in, and she had no intention of doing so on the present occasion.

The struggle had continued for an hour, and Barry Green was anxious for it to come to a successful end, which meant that the fair rider would prove the conqueror.

"Open the gate!" she cried.

Barry put his back firmly against it, and shook his head.

"Open the gate," she repeated sharply, "and I'll take it out of him."

"It's bad enough here," replied Barry. "He'll be the death of you if he gets away."

He watched her face and saw the storm rising, and when it burst he knew nothing could stop her ; she was quite capable of setting the colt at the fence, although there was no chance of his clearing it.

Essie Holt was accustomed to being obeyed. She rode the colt at Barry Green, who had barely time to fling open the gate and jump out of the way.

The colt, seeing the opening, dashed through, and her leg grazed the post. She was, as usual, riding astride, and had on her breeches and boots, with a dark blouse tucked in, and on her head a close-fitting cap.

Barry Green turned round and watched the colt galloping madly across the plain. The ground was hard and brown, for there had been no rain for some weeks. The thud of the horse's unshod hoofs sounded in his ears, and gradually died away in the distance. In a short time horse and rider looked like a speck on the horizon.

Barry roused himself, and saddling one of the station horses, rode after her. He knew it was useless to try and catch up with her, but he wanted to be within hail, in case she needed him. There were some rough characters at the diggings, which were several miles away, but these men occasionally wandered long distances over the country. He did not think anyone would harm her; she was a general favourite. But at times these miners broke loose, and then they were hardly responsible for their actions.

Essie Holt was thoroughly enjoying her wild ride, and thought to herself: "It will soon take it out of him at this pace." The colt discovered he had not gained his freedom by clearing the yard; he had made matters worse, for the pace was killing, and the sun hot and burning. His strides became shorter, and from time to time he faltered, but his rider urged him on, and did not

mean to let him slow down until he was thoroughly beaten.

"You will have had enough of it when I have done with you," she said, and gave him a couple of sharp cuts.

There was no resentment on the colt's part this time; he had no strength left to continue the struggle.

At last she drew rein, and turned him quietly round. His head was facing homewards, but he walked slowly along, stumbling, tired, and covered with sweat. His flanks heaved, and his tongue hung out, parched and dry; a drink of water would have been acceptable, but there was nothing but the scorched ground around, which reflected the heat and made it doubly hot.

She met Barry Green, who looked at the colt and said:

"You have beaten him this time, but he'll try it on again; don't imagine you have tamed him."

"He will get it worse next time," she replied. "Let us change mounts; I want to get home."

They reined in their horses; she sprang lightly from the saddle, and mounted the one he had ridden.

"I shall expect you both when I see you," she said merrily, as she waved her hand and rode away laughing.

Barry Green looked after her and sighed. He wished he had been born differently—that was his way of putting it—so that he could have met her as

an equal. He knew his faults and failings well enough. He deplored his lack of education and his uselessness in the world.

Edwin Holt, her father, was kind to him ; but Barry knew he regarded him as an irresponsible being, incapable of being entrusted with any difficult or skilful work. He once heard him say, when talking to Essie :

“Poor Barry ! He’s not very keen in his intellect, but he’s faithful, and I am sure he would do anything for you, Essie. I don’t wonder at it, for his early years were spent amongst the blacks, and it was quite by chance I came across him and took him away. He was the funniest little chap you ever saw, and he could hardly make himself understood.”

Then he remembered how his heart beat, and the tears came into his eyes, as he heard Miss Essie say :

“There is a good deal more in Barry than you think, dad ; and he is not quite the helpless creature you imagine. He is the best rider at Glengarry, and he has more sense than any of your other men.”

Her father laughed, and Barry heard him reply :

“You are prejudiced in his favour, little girl. He is your devoted slave, and with all his faults he can be trusted to look after you ; but I am afraid you are wrong in your estimate of his powers as a rider, as also in your calculation as to his amount of sense.”

“You will find out some day I am right,” said Essie. “The time may come when he will prove

my words true. I do not think Barry will be found wanting, if ever he gets a fair chance."

When Barry Green heard this, he vowed he would prove the truth of her words if he had the opportunity, and he repeated this to himself again as he rode slowly on the beaten colt towards Glengarry.

CHAPTER  
SECOND

*ESSIE IS STRONG  
ON PEDIGREES*

THERE were many hands employed on Glengarry, for it was a large station, some forty to fifty square miles of land, some good, some bad.

Edwin Holt was one of the first to settle in this hitherto almost neglected part of Northern Queensland. His selection meant isolation from civilisation, and a life of loneliness that to some men would have been appalling to contemplate. He was, however, a determined man, and capable of enduring great hardships. His wife resented his determination, and refused to live at Glengarry. This did not daunt him, although he felt her resolve keenly. In due time, however, Mrs. Holt changed her mind and joined him on the station, much to his delight. It was at Glengarry Essie was born, and this tie drew them closer together. Unfortunately, the climate did not suit Mrs. Holt, and she gradually pined away and died two years after her arrival.

Edwin Holt was sorely grieved at her early death. He blamed himself for allowing her to come to Glengarry, although she had done so willingly. He thought that had she remained in Brisbane her life might have been spared. Time, however, healed the

wound, and he transferred the strong affection of his powerful nature to his little daughter.

Essie, fortunately, inherited her father's constitution, and also his love of station life. Born at Glengarry, she had never known what the delights of a city life were, and it is questionable whether she would have preferred them under any circumstances. She was bred in the bush, a daughter of the lonely plains, the vast unpeopled tracts of land of central Northern Queensland. Environment moulds our natures, fashions and shapes them to suit the locality in which we live, and it was so with Essie Holt. That she had not experienced she did not miss, and like her almost constant companion, Barry Green, she had no idea of cities or crowds, or the rush and tumult incidental to a state of existence the exact opposite to her own. She was too young to miss her mother, but as she grew older she showered all her affection upon her father, and he returned it a hundredfold. Barry Green she regarded as her faithful attendant, and next to her father she gave him the preference over the other hands at Glengarry. At first this caused some jealousy, and Barry was tauntingly alluded to as "the nurse." He did not resent this openly, but when the opportunity arose he gave ample evidence upon the body of one of his tormentors that he had a strong arm, and a powerful fist—for "a nurse."

It was a pleasure to Barry to teach Essie to ride, and he found her an apt pupil. She had no fear when on a half-broken horse, and she handled all her

mounts dexterously, and enjoyed the spice of danger and the fun.

Edwin Holt was proud of his daughter's achievements in the saddle, although sometimes he was fearful for her safety, and on such occasions he vented his anger upon Barry, who took it all in good part, knowing his bark was much worse than his bite.

Glengarry was famous for its breed of horses, and strange to say, thoroughbreds and half-breeds thrived wonderfully on the land. Many years did not pass before Edwin Holt's name became famous all over the Colonies, and the well-known H brand on a horse's shoulder generally ensured the animal bringing a good price. Twice a year Edwin Holt went to Sydney or Brisbane with a consignment of horses of all breeds, and he always sold out quickly.

During his absence Essie was nominal mistress of the homestead, although Lydia Barker, the housekeeper, was practically in charge. She was a worthy soul, who had come from Townsville to nurse Mrs. Holt during her illness, and had remained there ever since. She was eminently suited to the position, although somewhat young, being about the same age as Barry Green. She was employed in the hospital at Townsville when she was sent to Glengarry, and it was with some difficulty, and only after a considerable amount of persuasion, Edwin Holt succeeded in inducing her to remain. The loneliness of the place chilled her at first, but she soon became accustomed

to it, and her little charge grew very dear to her. Essie was always a lovable, bright girl, with merry little ways and amusing mannerisms that constantly provoked laughter. Lydia Barker idolised her, and sometimes felt jealous of Barry Green and his attentions to her charge. Inside the house she ruled supreme, but when Essie was out of doors she had very little hold over the girl. Barry was aware of this feeling on Lydia's part, and it amused him. He knew Essie preferred the open air to the atmosphere of the house, and that a gallop on horseback was more in her line than the somewhat dull routine of household duties ; not that these were neglected, for Lydia Barker knew the future happiness of the girl might depend a good deal upon how she could manage her household. Servants there were none, of the female sex, at Glengarry. It was impossible to get them, and any assistance she required indoors was rendered by the Chinaman cook, a couple of intelligent, young half-caste lads, and occasionally Barry Green. The latter's services, however, were seldom required indoors, as Lydia was not anxious to have him in the house.

"Barry has quite enough of you outside without constantly coming indoors," she said to Essie.

"Poor Barry," said Essie mischievously. "I am afraid you dislike him ; but you ought not, for he has a very high opinion of you."

"His opinion is of no value to me," said Lydia.

"I value everyone's good opinion," replied Essie.

"In an ordinary way that may be proper, but I hardly think Barry's opinion carries much weight," said Lydia.

"I like him ; and as you pretend to be very fond of me, you ought to like him," said Essie.

"I do not dislike him. As far as he goes he is an estimable man. As for only pretending to love you, Essie, that is rather an unkind remark, is it not?"

"Yes, it is; and I didn't mean it," replied Essie quickly. "You are a dear—there, how do you like that?" and the impetuous girl kissed her on both cheeks.

Lydia's eyes shone with pleasure, and she was quite ready at that moment to proclaim that Barry Green was a very good fellow indeed. Essie generally managed to have her way with Lydia, as with most other people.

Edwin Holt entered the room, and cut short further discussion.

"I have just been giving Barry a bit of my mind," he said. "He had no business to allow you to ride that half-broken colt. I won't have it, Essie. Do you hear? I say you must not do such things. If you persist in trying to break your neck, and Barry assists you, I shall send him away."

Essie smiled. Her father threatened to send Barry away about twice a week on an average, but he still remained at Glengarry. She at once came to the rescue, and said :

"It was not Barry's fault. I persuaded Jonas to let me mount him; Barry ordered me to get down,

and was not over-polite about it, but of course I declined. I enjoyed the fun, and really the colt is not half a bad one. You will be glad to hear I mastered him."

"By Jove! did you?" exclaimed her father admiringly, forgetting all about the danger and Barry's delinquencies. "I know some men who would have found that a difficult task."

"I galloped it out of him. He came back as meek as a lamb," laughed Essie. "What are you going to do with him?"

"Take him with the next batch to Sydney. You will not be able to run any more risks with him then."

"He is too good to sell; why, he is thoroughbred, dad!"

"Is he? then you know more than I do, Miss Pert! Who told you he was thoroughbred?" asked her father.

"Barry. He says he's by The Monk, and his mother is Grey Darling."

Edwin Holt laughed as he replied:

"Barry imagines things. Of course his dam is Grey Darling, but his sire is not The Monk; I only wish he were."

"He says he can prove it," replied Essie.

"Nonsense! How can he prove it? What does he know?"

"That he did not tell me; but ask him for the information yourself. Promise me you will not send

him to Sydney in the next drove. I have taken a fancy to him."

"Because you got the better of him, eh?" laughed her father.

"That is one reason."

"Have you another?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"If he is by The Monk from Grey Darling, he is one of the best bred colts we have. Keep him until you find out if such is the case."

"Very well, I will; and Barry shall tell me what reason he has to think he is by The Monk. I'll look him up now, while I think about it," and he left the room.

"Essie, I wish you would not talk so familiarly about horses; it is not nice for a young lady," said Lydia.

Essie laughed merrily as she replied:

"My conversational powers would be limited if horses were not allowed to enter into them."

"But you need not go into questions of breeding, and such-like subjects. What does it matter whether The Monk is the sire of the colt or not?"

"Matter!" exclaimed Essie. "It matters everything. The Monk is a splendid horse. He's by The Abbot, and The Abbot is by Monastery, and Monastery is by The Friar, and The Friar is by—"

"For goodness' sake, stop, child," said Lydia, horrified. "Wherever did you learn all these names?"

"I found them in the stud book; it is a most interesting volume."

"Not at all a proper book for a young lady to read."

"It is far more interesting than Mrs. Bacon's Cookery Book, which you study so deeply."

"And to the advantage of your father and yourself, I hope," replied Lydia, smiling.

"Yes, that is so. You are a duck of a cook, Lydia, but you are hopelessly ignorant about pedigrees," laughed Essie.

"And I hope to always remain so."

"Please do not say that," replied Essie.

"Why not? I mean it."

"Because a horse without a pedigree is like a man without a character; there is no safety in employing him," retorted Essie, at which answer Lydia Barker shook her head, and gave up the case as hopeless.

CHAPTER  
THIRD

*HER IDEAS ON  
TRAINING*

"BARRY GREEN, how many times have I given you notice to leave Glengarry?" said Edwin Holt.

Receiving no reply, he repeated his question.

Barry scratched his head and looked puzzled.

"Come, out with it," said Edwin Holt.

"It takes some reckoning up," replied Barry. "I should say about forty or fifty times."

"And you are still here?" said his master.

"It seems like it."

"Now, mark my words this time. If ever you allow Miss Essie to ride that colt again, out you go. Do you understand?"

"It was not my fault she mounted him. I did my best to persuade her to get down, but she took no notice—merely laughed at me. If I had not let her go through the gateway she would have jumped the fence. She beat him though, after a tough struggle. She can ride above a bit, can Miss Essie," said Barry, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"So she can; you are right there," replied her father enthusiastically. "There's not many girls to beat her at her age," replied Barry.

"Nor any other age," replied Barry.

"What's all this nonsense you have been telling her about the colt being by The Monk?" asked Edwin Holt.

"It is not nonsense, it's gospel truth; I only found it out the other week."

"Found what out?"

"That he is by The Monk."

"I don't believe it."

"I do."

"Give me your reasons."

"You'll not be angry with me?" said Barry.

"What mischief have you been up to now?"

"About a month back I went to Phelim's at The Bushman," said Barry.

Edwin Holt looked black, and said angrily:

"You know I have forbidden my men going there. Phelim Rench is a bad lot. How dare you disobey my orders?"

"I met a mate from Caroo, and he persuaded me to go with him. He had business with Phelim."

"Pretty business, I'll be bound; some more infernal roguery."

"No harm was done that I heard of. We had a bit of a burst up, and that was the reason I was away from here for a couple of days. It will not happen again. I never had such a head before," said Barry woefully.

Edwin Holt laughed as he replied:

"It serves you right. Phelim sells some potent liquor I am told; no doubt it suits his purpose."

"Maybe it does; anyway it didn't suit me."

"What has your visit to Phelim got to do with the breeding of my colt?" asked Edwin Holt.

"I'm coming to that."

"You are a long time about it."

"We stayed over night at The Bushman, and next morning some men arrived who were on their way to Townsville in order to proceed to Sydney by the steamer. One of them was the man who looked after The Monk when Mr. Boscomb had him. It appears he had been discharged, and was making his way to Sydney; he had not been well treated at Boscomb's for some time past."

"Perhaps he did not deserve to be treated well," said Mr. Holt.

"I don't know the right or the wrong of it," replied Barry, "but I heard him talking about The Monk, and he said you had a colt by him out of Grey Darling, or ought to have."

"What can he know about it?"

"You recollect when the mare disappeared for a few weeks and we searched all over the country for her."

"Yes, I shall not forget it in a hurry. I should like to discover how she got out of the paddock," said Edwin Holt.

"From what I could make out, two of the men who were with Boscomb's man stole her, and took her over to The Monk."

"Then this man must have been in it with them," said Edwin Holt.

"He may have been. At all events, he said Grey

Darling's foal that season must be by The Monk, and that is the colt you have at present. Mr. Boscomb knows nothing of this, and from what I could gather, The Monk had been used by this man on several occasions, and he had drawn the fees," said Barry.

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Edwin Holt. "No wonder he has been discharged."

"What surprised me most," went on Barry, "was when he said he had seen our colt, and he was certain he was by The Monk."

"Where did he see him? I do not think he resembles The Monk," said Edwin Holt.

"He saw him the day I rode him over to Caroo."

"And he nearly finished you off," laughed Edwin.

"That he did. I was precious glad to get safely back to Glengarry."

"It is a curious business; but if what you say is correct, it is more than probable he is by The Monk. We do not know his sire, or how she got in foal that season, so this may be the solution of the question. I hope it is. No doubt the men who stole the mare were anxious to get a good foal, and that was the reason they approached this man. I wonder how they lost her again."

"I heard that too," said Barry. "She got away from them, and although they chased her for miles they had to give it up when she headed for Glengarry. She must have known her way home."

"It is wonderful how horses will find their way back to a station," said Edwin Holt. "It was a

pleasant surprise to me when the mare turned up again. I must write to Dennis Boscomb, and tell him we think the colt is by The Monk, and give him the reason."

"Is there any necessity to say anything about it to him?" asked Barry. "He is a peculiar man, I have heard, and he might not believe the story."

"He can please himself about that, but I think I ought to tell him," said Edwin.

When Essie questioned him, he told her what Barry had said, and she replied that there could not be much doubt the colt was by The Monk.

"I shall have him trained," said her father, "and see how he shapes. If he is by The Monk, he ought to have no end of speed."

"And will you race him if he turns out well?" asked Essie eagerly.

"I hardly know. We are at such a disadvantage here, so far away from all race meetings, and we have no facilities for training horses properly," he replied.

"We can get over that difficulty. There is plenty of good-going ground to gallop him on, and I do not see why we should not be able to find out what he is made of in our own way," said Essie.

"Perhaps you would like to take him in hand yourself," said her father, smiling.

"I should, indeed," she replied quickly.

He laughed heartily, and seemed amused at her confidence in herself.

"I do not think a girl your age can manage such

a difficult task. Training horses, my dear, requires skill and patience."

"Both of which I possess," she interrupted.

"No doubt; but they also require a little more time to mature. How would you propose to start his preparation?" asked her father, urging her on.

"Let me see; how ought I to commence?" replied Essie seriously and thoughtfully; he saw she was evidently in earnest. "Oh, I know! First of all, he must be given to understand there must be no display of temper on his part, and that he must be amenable to discipline. I think I have taught him that already, but it remains to be seen. When he thoroughly understands that I am master, and he has to conform to my ideas of what is right and proper, his education can be proceeded with rapidly."

"So far so good," said her father, smiling. "What is the next step?"

"He must be put through his paces. I have read all about trials at Randwick and Flemington in the Sydney and Melbourne papers. Some horses, I noticed, were sent for a six furlong spin, others over a mile, and others a longer distance. I think a mile would be a fair gallop for him to commence with."

"And who is to ride him in his work, eh, Essie?" he asked.

She looked surprised at the question, and said: "I shall ride him, of course."

"You!" exclaimed her astonished father. "I never heard of such a thing."

"If I ride horses merely for exercise, why cannot I ride a horse when he is in training? I do not see much difference," said Essie.

"But it is not the correct thing," he protested.

"Please do not lecture me like Miss Barker," she replied.

"Then Lydia gives you some good advice occasionally?"

"She does, and I receive it in a meek and proper frame of mind; but if you commence, dad, I shall rebel."

"Then I will not appear in the rôle of lecturer," he replied, with a laugh. "Are you really serious about riding the colt at work?"

"Of course, and I am sure you will give me permission."

"It will be dangerous. I am afraid he has a bad temper, and is not tamed yet. I do not wish my little girl to come to any harm, nor do I wish to deny her any reasonable pleasure."

"Then you will hand the colt over to me to train?" she said, her eyes eager with anticipation.

"It requires consideration," he said.

"That means a consultation with Lydia," she replied, pouting.

"Not necessarily," he answered; "but I have every respect for her judgment."

"So have I, in most things; but horses, and everything connected with them, are beyond her. She actually confessed to being unable to find any interest in the stud book."

"I don't wonder at it," laughed her father. "It is very dull reading to a person who does not understand it."

"Then how can you expect her to give advice on a subject with which she is unacquainted? It is not fair to ask her. Will you hand the colt over to me to train? Do, there's a good, kind-hearted dad. It will give me so much pleasure, also something to do, and keep me out of mischief. I will take every care of myself, and not run any risk," said Essie.

"You must be very careful," he said, yielding to a pressure he seldom resisted.

"I will, indeed I will," she answered eagerly.

"And Barry can help you, and ride the colt if he proves fractious; he may not always be on his best behaviour."

"Very well; I will agree to having Barry's assistance, but he will seldom have the chance of a ride. All he will have to do will be to look on while I enjoy the fun," she said.

Essie had her own way, as she generally had with her father, and was delighted at her victory. She was eager to impart her news to Lydia.

"Just to see how she will take it," said Essie to herself.

She bounced into the kitchen and found her in the midst of a hot argument with the Chinaman cook, who was an independent heathen, and would not brook interference with his work. On the whole, he was a good cook, but there were times when he so manipulated things that there was some difficulty in

placing them when they appeared on the table. He had a rare flow of language, and a torrent of pigeon English was pouring forth when Essie entered.

She stopped, facing him, as he brandished a large ladle, and said to her :

"Missie Essie, Missie Essie, you know Johnnie make 'em cake welly nicey. No sticky, no nasty, no anything, always nicey."

"Sometimes, Johnnie. As a rule you are a good cook for a Chinaman," said Essie.

"Chinaman like a cook welly well. Chinaman good cook. You no say so ; me go, welly well." And the indignant son of Confucius banged down the ladle on the floor.

"He is intolerable," snapped Lydia.

"Tolerable," said Johnnie, "welly good, no tolerable."

Essie laughed heartily, and said :

"Come along, Lydia, I have something to tell you. Let us leave Johnnie to simmer down. By-bye, Johnnie ; let me know when you are leaving, so that I can wish you a long farewell."

"Johnnie no leave Missie Essie, only leave Missie Lydy," said the Chinaman, as he picked up his ladle again and turned to business.

"What have you to tell me, Essie ?" asked Lydia.

"Something startling. Prepare to be shocked," replied the girl, with a merry laugh.

## CHAPTER FOURTH

## *A COLLECTOR OF KNIVES*

"I HAVE discovered a fresh occupation," said Essie. "My time will be fully taken up, and I shall have no more idle days."

"I am very pleased to hear it," said Lydia. "And what may the new occupation be?"

"One of the utmost importance, and fraught with grave consequences," replied Essie. "I assure you I feel the responsibility, and the worst of it is, I do not think I shall be able to avail myself of your assistance and advice, which is, I may say, the only drawback."

Lydia looked pleased, or feigned to be, but she had her doubts as to the nature of any occupation for Essie in which she could take no part.

"I have arranged everything with my father, and he has consented to my taking sole charge of him."

"Him!" exclaimed Lydia, in astonishment.

"I must explain," said Essie, laughing. "'Him' is the colt by The Monk."

"And how can he concern you in your new occupation?" asked Lydia.

"He *is* the occupation. I have to look after him; he has been handed over to me, and I am going to train him," said Essie.

"How absurd!" said Lydia.

"Not at all, my dear; it is a very wise decision on my father's part. I assure you he could not have selected a better trainer."

"It is ridiculous—most unladylike; I never heard of such a thing. Really, your father allows you too much of your own way. I must endeavour to show him the folly of it," said Lydia.

Essie laughed as she replied:

"You know my father too well to endeavour to make him break his word; and he has promised to allow me to train the horse."

"Then, if your father will not give way, let me appeal to you. We have always been very good friends, Essie, and I love you dearly. Believe me, it is for your own sake I ask you to give up this rash project."

"I cannot give it up; but we shall still remain friends," replied Essie. "It will shock you still more when you hear I am going to ride the colt at exercise."

"And your father permits this!" exclaimed Lydia.

"Yes, and seems rather pleased about it, although at first he raised objections."

"I should think so; and I am surprised you overcame them."

"I was determined to have my own way."

"As you are in most cases," said Lydia.

"And generally succeed."

"Unfortunately, yes."

"That is not at all complimentary," said Essie.

"It is not good for young girls to have so much of their own way," replied Lydia.

It so happened that when Lydia Barker desired to be a nurse her parents were strongly opposed to it, but eventually gave way. This was due to her firm determination to follow the occupation she had decided upon. Essie knew this, and held an advantage accordingly.

"I know someone who was very determined, and succeeded in having her own way, and it does not appear to have done her much harm," said Essie, smiling.

"I suppose you allude to me, and my desire to become a nurse," said Lydia.

"I do."

"Then allow me to inform you, my dear, that nursing is a noble occupation, and training horses is—is—is—"

"Is what?" laughed Essie.

"A very low occupation, and not fit for a lady to undertake, or even a gentleman," said Lydia.

"How is it so many people always consider anything and everything connected with horses low and paltry, and tending to degrade the mind? I have found during my short experience that men who are fond of horses are generally kind-hearted, and trustworthy, and inspire confidence. Have you had opportunities of learning much about such people?" slyly asked Essie.

"Indeed I have not. I should be very sorry to

have anything to do with them," indignantly replied Lydia.

"Then I fail to see how you have any knowledge of them, and it is not fair to express an opinion about men whose occupations have never come under your notice," said Essie.

"I know training a horse, or horses, is not a fit occupation for a lady."

"Then I will try and elevate it, and make it so. I may be able to effect some slight reformation in the ranks of trainers in time," replied Essie, with a smile.

"And when do you commence this unladylike work?"

"To-morrow, my dear. Will you come and see my first start? It may be interesting in many ways. For instance, I may be thrown, or the colt may bolt, or other untoward circumstances may tend to jeopardise my existence. At any rate, I think I may safely assure you there will be some fun, and you certainly ought not to miss it."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said Lydia, "and I am sorry I have so little influence over you."

As she left the room, Essie watched her with a humorous smile on her face, and thought:

"She is a good, kind-hearted friend, and I am sorry to offend her; but she will give in, as usual, and it will not be long before she comes out to watch the colt gallop. Oh, I wish it were morning! I must go and consult with Barry; he will take a greater interest in my communication than Lydia."

Barry Green was killing time whittling a stick, a favourite occupation, conducive to deep thinking, or such meditation as he was capable of. Barry had many knives; if he had a hobby, it was the collecting of articles to assist him in his favourite recreation of "whittling." It was surprising how he came by such a store of vagrant cutlery. There were knives with horn handles, wooden handles, cork handles, and blades with no handles. He kept them in a large box in his room over the stable, and he sorted them out carefully, and gazed fondly upon his treasures every Saturday night. On these occasions he generally emerged from the struggle with cut fingers, and gashes on various parts of his hands. These he did not seem to mind. He washed the blood away, carefully examined the damaged spots, and placed each wound to the credit of its proper knife. He seemed to look with a certain amount of pride at the deepest, cleanest cut, and carefully examine the blade that did the mischief. This was a knife to be honoured; the gash proved it was superior to the others, and it was selected for special duty—otherwise, to whittle the best wood. Barry seemed to test his knife blades on his own person with evident satisfaction. In this he stood peculiarly aloof from his kind. Most men, if there happened to be any such testing to be done, would prefer to use other bodies than their own. There is, however, no accounting for taste—or, to be more correct in this case, feeling—and Barry Green and his knives seldom quarrelled. Only on one occasion had it come to

the notice of his fellow-hands that he had discarded a knife as useless. He had been observed at work trying to notch a particularly hard stick. In the effort the blade snapped in two. He continued with the portion left in the haft until they parted company, and in the course of the dismemberment the handle split in twain. Barry was noticed to carefully pick up the pieces; he then scraped a hole in the ground with the wood guilty of the slaughter, buried them, and then contemplated the spot for some moments sadly.

He was chaffed about his proceedings, but he merely replied that he buried the fragments because he considered them even in that state to be far too good for common hands to use.

Barry Green had one cherished possession. It was a bushman's knife, presented to him by Essie Holt. Being the most useful piece of cutlery he had, he never used it; he regarded it with too much veneration. It was Miss Essie's present, and as such it was only to be looked at, and not handled. He regarded it with similar feelings to Johnnie, the Chinaman cook, who had an ivory god fixed up in his sleeping apartment, and daily asked it to bless his undertakings in the region of the kitchen. Barry's was a beautiful fetish; in this it differed from Johnnie's, for his god was about the most scoundrelly-looking object even a heathen ever clapped eyes upon.

On one occasion Miss Essie's knife had been abstracted from Barry's box. It was done as a joke, but the result almost ended in murder. Barry

discovered the culprit, secured the knife, and was with difficulty prevented from plunging it into the desecrator's body.

When taken in hand by Edwin Holt, Barry Green had no name, but after some time he received one. It was inconvenient to call him "boy" when there was no legitimate title to distinguish him from the other hands. "Boy" was of no use; there were already half a dozen bearing that familiar name, and all answering to the call in a body.

A hand left whose name was Barry Green. Without any ceremony, or regard to the filching of another man's rights in his own name, this was bestowed upon the collector of cutlery curios, and the new Barry Green arose in the place of the departed.

One name was as good as another to Barry, and he gave no thought to the fact that his predecessor in the title was a shocking bad lot. On one occasion, however, he discovered this adoption had inconveniences. It was during a visit to The Bushman's Inn. Phelim Rench was absent, and the man in charge was unacquainted with the original Barry Green. He was, however, aware that there was a considerable score owing by the said Barry Green, and when he heard the name mentioned in the bar, he pounced down upon the new possessor of it.

Barry protested he had never been in the house before, eventually became abusive, and was thrown out of the sacred, but dirty and odoriferous, precincts. This incident amused Edwin Holt vastly, but Barry

regarded it in quite another light, seeing it entirely from a different point of view.

As a kind of set-off, he opened a letter addressed to Barry Green, Glengarry Station. Had it contained anything of value, he would have considered himself justified in annexing it, but unfortunately it did not.

The contents were limited to a long slip of paper, on which were numerous scrawls Barry took to be figures. He was informed, upon consulting Edwin Holt as to its contents, that it was from Phelim Rench demanding payment of Barry Green's score.

"I think you had better pay it, and save further trouble," said Edwin Holt dryly.

Barry looked at him, made no remark, quietly walked away, and wondered whether, after all, he would not have been better off without a name in the world.

CHAPTER  
FIFTH

*ESSIE SECURES  
A RECRUIT*

"YOU don't say so? Do you really mean it, Miss Essie? You are so fond of a joke, you know," said Barry Green, with a broad smile, when he heard her announce that she was to have the training of the colt by The Monk.

"I always mean what I say; you ought to have found that out by this time," replied Essie. "I am to have the entire control of him, and you are to help me in training him, although I doubt you will be of very little use. Won't it be fun, Barry?" and she clapped her hands excitedly.

Barry gravely shook his head, and shuffled his feet. He had his doubts about the fun, and foresaw numerous altercations and threats of dismissal with her father. If Miss Essie got into any trouble, he would have to bear the blame—not that he minded that in the least; but he was doubtful about this undertaking and its probable consequences. He knew Essie thoroughly, and admired her courage; wherein lay the danger.

Essie looked at him, and stamping her foot impatiently, said:

"If you do not wish to assist me, I have no doubt someone else will be only too pleased."

"Of course I will help you," he replied. "That may be taken for granted ; I was not thinking of that."

"What is there to think about ?" asked Essie.

"Whether you will meet with any accident. I dare not face your father if you came to grief."

"You are an old croaker," she replied impatiently. "Don't you think I can manage him ?"

"I know you can."

"Then where is the danger ?"

"He's a rum colt to handle. He's as full of tricks as a monkey," said Barry.

"I know him well now, and he will not humbug me," said Essie.

"It's a great task training a horse," replied Barry. "Is he going to be raced ?"

"Of course he is, you silly man ! Do you suppose I would train him and get him fit if there was to be no satisfaction out of it ? I am going to win a big race with him, Barry, and you must help me to wind him up."

"Wind him up !" exclaimed Barry. "I never heard of winding a horse up."

Essie put on a superior air ; she had read in the papers about a horse not being thoroughly wound up, or that he was wound up to concert pitch, and as fit as hands could make him.

"When a horse is wound up it means he is wound up," said Essie.

"And what does that mean ?" asked Barry, not being enlightened by such a lucid explanation.

"It means that he is able to gallop well," said Essie, thinking of her watch. "If you let a horse run down, he must want winding up to make him go. You see it is quite simple."

Barry gazed at her admiringly ; he was surprised at her knowledge.

"I see," he said. "You know an awful lot, Miss Essie ; I wish I was wise like you."

"Then you think I know something ?" said Essie.

"Rather. What do you think ?" said Barry, with a grimace.

"Don't be rude," said Essie ; "that is a vulgar expression. Where did you hear it ?"

"The new boy from Brisbane uses it ; I thought it a bit handy," said Barry, at which remark Essie could not resist laughing.

"Where is the new boy from Brisbane ? I have not seen him," she said. "What is he like ?"

"He's a rum little fellow, but he knows a lot. I can't make him out. He's quiet, and he's deep, that's certain."

"What makes you think he's deep ?"

"For one thing, because he's quiet, and most of them quiet 'uns are deep. Then he talks like a man of thirty, and he can't be more than sixteen or seventeen," said Barry ; then turning round, he saw the object of his remarks, and said, "That's him."

"Call him," said Essie ; and Barry hailed him in a loud voice.

The new-comer came at his call, and respectfully saluted Essie. He seemed a superior kind of young

man, more refined, and neater than the ordinary run of hands at Glengarry. Essie wondered how he came there ; her father had not mentioned it to her, and her curiosity was aroused. He was small, and yet well made, and although pale and slight, did not look delicate.

"When did you arrive here?" she asked.

"Last week."

"From Brisbane?"

"Yes."

"Why cannot he tell me more without being questioned," thought Essie.

"Did you know my father?" she asked.

"I have seen him in Brisbane sometimes when he has been there with horses."

"What made you come to Glengarry? It is such an out-of-the-way place, and a long way from Brisbane."

"I wanted to get away from the place. I was sick of it, and the life I led," he replied.

Essie looked at him curiously, and wondered what that life had been.

"Then you do not like city life?" she asked.

"Not the kind of existence I had. I have been unfortunate."

"In what way."

"My father was drowned at sea, and the shock killed my mother. That was four years ago, and I am not quite eighteen."

"And you had to earn your living?"

"Yes, that is so. I left school, and went to work

with my uncle. He kept a livery stable, and we did not get on well together. I stood it for a long time, but when it came to cuffs and blows I resented it," he said.

"I should think so," said Essie indignantly. "What did you do?"

"I paid him back in his own coin. I struck him over the head with the fork I had in my hands and stunned him ; then I walked out of the yard, down to the Howard Smith Wharf, and took a steerage passage to Townsville. I thought that would be far enough away for a start. I did odd jobs there, but saw no chance of getting on. Someone mentioned your father's name, and I thought he might give me a chance, as I knew a good deal about horses, and could ride well, so I tramped up here, and a rough time I had of it."

"So you can ride?" said Essie eagerly. "He may come in useful to help us, Barry."

Barry Green had not anticipated this, and he was jealous of the new hand. He wanted to be all in all to Miss Essie, and did not like the idea of this arrangement.

"I can manage alone," he growled.

"But we may have more horses than the colt to train ; he cannot gallop alone always," said Essie.

"I have ridden horses at work at Eagle Farm," said the new hand.

"Where is that?" asked Essie.

"It is the race-course at Brisbane, a nice place, and there are a lot of horses trained there."

"You have ridden race-horses?" said Essie eagerly. "What is it like?"

"Splendid. They fly over the ground. I like nothing better; it beats everything I know," he replied quickly. "My uncle owned three or four, and I rode at exercise for him when he required me. I think he will be sorry I left him, for he always said I should make a good rider."

"You shall have a chance of showing your skill," said Essie. "I will ask my father to let you ride some of our well-bred horses, and then we shall find out whether they can race. It will be glorious if we can get a good team together."

Barry Green was sullen and downcast, and Essie said sharply :

"What is the matter with you? Instead of looking so glum you ought to be pleased. You cannot ride all the horses yourself. Don't be so selfish!"

"It's not that," he said wistfully. "I like to think you can't do without me."

"Do without you? Of course I cannot! Barry is my very good friend," she said, with a smile.

He brightened up at once, and said :

"Then I have no doubt we shall get on well together."

"I am sure we shall," replied the stranger.

"What is your name?" asked Essie.

"Dick Edgar."

"Well, then, Dick, I suppose you have no objections to acting as second in command to Barry?"

He is a jealous mortal, but on the whole bearable, when you understand him."

"I shall be only too pleased, if your father permits it."

"He will give his sanction, I am sure. Does he know you can ride?"

"I said I was a good rider when he took me on here," replied Dick.

"But does he know you have ridden race-horses?"

"No. I did not tell him that."

"Then I will, and point out to him how useful you can be to me—and Barry."

Dick Edgar walked across the yard, and thought what a splendid girl Essie Holt was.

"It will be a pleasure to work for her," he said to himself. "That fellow Barry will be difficult to get on with, but I think I can manage him. This is better than slaving for Tom Edgar in Brisbane. No wonder they call him 'Black Tommy'; he deserves the name. He'd half kill me if he got the chance, after that blow I gave him. I wonder why he was so hard on me. I always did my best for him until he made me hate him. I am glad I am at Glengarry, and the boss is a rare one to work for."

Essie told her father of her conversation with Dick Edgar, and said:

"I want you to grant me another favour, dad."

"What is it, my girl; anything in reason, and right?" he replied heartily.

"Let Dick help us to train the colt."

"It will not take three of you surely."

"No; but there are other horses that can gallop, and I want to find out how good they are. He is accustomed to riding, and will come in useful. Who knows but we may have a real champion amongst them," said Essie.

Her father laughed as he said :

"I am afraid my little girl is leading me astray ; it will never do for Edwin Holt of Glengarry to turn racing mad."

"You silly dad ! Just as if you could do anything mad. I am only asking you to try and discover the worth of the horses you possess."

"Luring me on with a tempting bait, eh ?"

"I do not think you require much persuading," she replied.

"I have no desire to go in for racing," he said.

"Then allow me to do it for you."

He laughed heartily, and said :

"You are willing to take all the responsibility on to your young shoulders."

"Yes ; and I think I am quite capable of it."

"No doubt," he answered, much amused at her precocity.

"Do be serious ; I really mean what I say," she said.

"Quite so ; and you are determined ?"

"I am."

"Then I suppose I must give in, and be led by my daughter into the stormy paths of

the turf. I hope we shall not come to grief," he replied.

"Not a tiny little bit of fear of that," she said joyfully. "I shall discover a treasure amongst our horses; I am sure of it. I have found one already in the colt, and where he came from there are more. How many horses have we on Glengarry?"

"That's more than I can tell until they are rounded up," he said with a laugh. "It will take a long time to sort out the best colts and fillies."

"Won't it be fun!" she exclaimed.

He looked fondly at her bright, eager face, and thought:

"How merry and happy and free from care she is; may it always be so with her. God bless my little girl!"

"What are you thinking about, dad?"

"You, my pet."

She kissed him and nestled against him. "Do you often think about me, dad?"

"Often! Always, little girl," he said.

"I am afraid I cannot say as much," she replied regretfully, "but I do love you, dad, indeed, indeed I do."

"No need to tell me that," he said cheerfully. "You are young, and the thoughts of youth are not the thoughts of middle age; but I know you will always keep the warmest corner in your affections for me."

"I do, and I always shall," she replied; but he knew there might come a time when he would have to take second place in her heart, and he felt he could do it, and be happy, if it helped to brighten her life and increase her joy in living.

CHAPTER  
SIXTH

*CAMPING BY  
THE RIVER*

ESSIE, having made up her mind and obtained her father's permission to select the best horses for training, did not delay in setting about it. Her youthful energies were concentrated upon the work she had in hand, and there was considerable bustle and excitement at Glengarry.

"We are going to have a round up and get the horses together," she said to Lydia.

"And does that concern you, my dear?" she asked.

"Very much, indeed. I am to be in charge during the proceedings; the whole of the responsibility devolves upon me. What do you think of that?"

"It is a man's work, and you ought to leave it to the hands," said Lydia.

Essie laughed as she replied: "Still prejudiced, I see; but I have no fear about your ultimate conversion to my way of thinking."

"Never," replied Lydia. "I hope you will come to no harm."

Lydia Barker spoke to Edwin Holt on the subject, and he listened attentively but did not change his mind, or alter his determination.

"I do not think it at all out of place for a girl in Essie's position," he said. "You see she has been bred in the bush, and the life is far different to that of city girls. It is a healthy occupation for her, and there will be no one to criticise her conduct."

"She may not live here all her life," said Lydia, "and you would not like her to be considered too mannish."

He laughed as he replied :

"You need have no fear of her becoming mannish ; a regular romp we know she is, and all the better for it. I am sure it will do her no harm. On the contrary, it will improve her health and physique, and horse exercise is most beneficial."

"I am aware of that ; but training horses is hardly a proper occupation for her, and she tells me you have given her permission to ride them when at work."

"So I have, and she will enjoy it," he replied.

Lydia saw it would be of no avail to argue the matter with him, so gave it up for the present ; but she was firmly determined, if she got a favourable opportunity, to renew the subject again.

Essie was busy giving orders for the round up and drive. Glengarry was a large station, and in addition to the land he owned, her father had the run of many miles of wild country, which stretched far into the land of the blacks, and beyond that, where no white man had as yet set foot.

Edwin Holt bred a large number of horses every year, and purchased good thoroughbred sires to run with the mares. These horses singled out a number of mates, and kept strictly to them, but occasionally a battle royal took place between two stallions which was a wild sight to witness. It was difficult in some instances to tell how the foals were bred, but in the majority of cases the sire and dam were known. At six years of age many of the horses and mares were unbroken, and during that time roamed about the country in unrestricted freedom. It was no easy task to muster a drove of these wild horses—they could be called by no other name, although not actually “brumbys.” There was some amount of danger attending a round up, for the stallions were savage, and resented the intrusion of strangers. The excitement was, however, enhanced by the peril incurred, and no game or sport is of much account that does not possess an element of danger.

Half-a-dozen picked men, including Barry Green and Dick Edgar, were selected by Edwin Holt for the work, and he and Essie were to accompany them. He did not wish her to go, but she pleaded so hard to see the fun that he consented.

It was a hot, dry morning when they set out for the wild country where the horses would probably be found. This was by no means the easiest part of the work, and sometimes it was several days before they came up with them. They had extra pack-horses to carry their provisions and a small

canvas tent for the accommodation of Essie at night. This her father insisted upon, although she would have preferred camping out in the open.

Glengarry was situated in the Gilbert country, the river of that name running through Edwin Holt's land, and the nearest township of any pretensions was Cumberland, on the Cumberland Creek, about half-a-dozen miles from its junction with the Gilbert River. Round about this district were numerous gold finds, and consequently a considerable number of the population engaged in mining, and many rough characters were to be found amongst them. Farming on a small scale was carried on in the vicinity of the township, and good crops of maize, potatoes, both English and sweet, and tropical fruits were grown. Along the banks of the Gilbert River is magnificent soil, and in the bed underneath may be found an almost constant supply of running water, an inestimable boon in such a hot climate, which, however, has the advantage of being healthy.

Between the Gregory Ranges and the Gilbert River most of Edwin Holt's property lay, but it extended as far as the Nonda country, and the wild lands stretched in an almost unbroken plain right into the heart of the Cape York Peninsula. In the vicinity of the Gilbert River and the Nonda country blacks at this time were numerous, and many of them were powerful and savage, regarding the white man as a natural enemy.

Sometimes a number of blacks of the Nonda tribe

visited Glengarry, and it was only by the exercise of patience and diplomacy, and showing no fear of their numbers, that they were kept in order. Edwin Holt had a good name amongst the Nonda tribe, and the blacks seldom harmed his stock.

It was into the heart of the country around the Gilbert River they made their way, in the hope of quickly coming up with a mob of horses. They were all well prepared for the work they had in hand. The short-handled, long-lashed stock-whips hung from the saddles, and three of the men were experts with the lasso, and this formidable rope came in very handy at times.

Essie was in excellent spirits, and looking eagerly forward to some exciting sport. She had never been on such an extended journey up the country, and naturally everything she saw interested her. The first night a halt was made on the banks of the Gilbert River, where tea-trees, weeping-willows, and a variety of fern growths made a shady, cool, favourable space for camping.

Essie's tent was pitched, and she superintended the process with delight. The experience was new to her, and the novelty pleased her. She felt like a wandering princess surrounded by a band of faithful retainers. Here, in the heart of Northern Queensland, she revelled in untrammelled freedom, surrounded by the wonderful handiwork of Nature, and far from all civilised conventionalities, with their many falsehoods and shams. The men around her, with the exception of her father, were rough and hardy, but they might

be trusted to protect her and shield her from any danger that might arise. She loved the life of the bush, the plains, and the wild, rugged mountains, and flowing rivers. The varied moods of Nature she had watched with wondering eyes since she was a little girl, and found it all intensely interesting. Animal life provided a never-failing source of amusement and instruction to her, and their habits and abodes were familiar. Essie was a true child of the lonesome country in which she had been reared. To her it was a land full of interest, and it never palled upon her. She was soothed, not oppressed, by the greatness of its silence, when sometimes the whole earth seemed to be asleep, lulled, subdued to slumber by the heat, fanned to waking life again by the passing breezes of the night.

It was a glorious evening when they camped on the banks of the river. Essie's tent was pitched under a shady tree, whose drooping branches made a natural palisade around it. Her father was amused and pleased at the interest she took in everything.

"You are glad we brought the tent, are you not?" he asked.

"Yes, I am, indeed ; I had no idea it would prove so useful and pleasant. I think I shall hold a reception before we start in the morning," she replied.

"Then I had better give due notice of this important decision to-night," he said, smiling, "so that they

may all have an early dip and make themselves presentable."

"They are sure to bathe, orders or no orders," she answered. "Who could resist such an enticing swim. I think I shall have one myself in some secluded spot."

"You will look like a fairy out for a bathe," said her father.

"A water sprite," laughed Essie.

Fires were lighted round the camp, and the smoke drove away the mosquitoes, which were troublesome near the water.

Essie and her father sat at the entrance to her tent, talking over the prospects of the drive.

"You must not be too sanguine," he said, "or I am afraid you will be disappointed. There may be a few good ones in the mob, but I am afraid the majority will not be fit for your purpose."

"If we can pick out two or three I shall be satisfied," she replied. "How many do you think we shall muster?"

"Between thirty and forty," he replied; "perhaps more."

"Then there will be plenty to pick and choose from."

"The difficulty will be to select the best. It will take time and patience to discover their good qualities, if they have any," he replied.

"With the help of Barry Green and Dick Edgar I shall soon be able to make a selection. Will it not

be fun training horses at Glengarry? I wonder what people will think of us?" she said.

"Shake their heads and prophesy our speedy downfall," said her father, laughing. "It seems a wild scheme to try and train race-horses in such an out-of-the-way place as Glengarry. I do not know where we can run them if they turn out any good."

"There are meetings at Townsville, Rockhampton, Charters Towers, and Brisbane," said Essie. "Fancy our winning a Brisbane Cup with the colt by The Monk, or one of those we are going to find in the mob."

"You must not fly at too high game at first, Essie, or you will be sure to be disappointed. Some very good horses run at all the places you have named, and a Brisbane Cup will be quite beyond Glengarry fame," he replied.

"I am not so sure about that," she answered. "Dick Edgar has ridden horses at Eagle Farm, and he knows what they can do. He ought to have some idea whether any we have will be good enough to win there."

"He is only a youngster, and his judgment may not count for much," said her father, "although he seems a sensible lad. His uncle is considered a clever man amongst horses in Brisbane. I have had dealings with him, but I confess I have no particular desire to become better acquainted with 'Black Tommy,' as they call him."

"Dick seems to have had a rough life there," said Essie.

"I am not surprised at it," answered her father. "Black Tommy is by no means gentle in his manners or his ways."

"Did he own any good horses?" asked Essie.

"One or two. He won the Brisbane Cup, or the Sandgate Handicap, I forget which, with The Ace. That was a couple of years ago; perhaps Dick recollects it. There he is; I'll ask him," and he called him by name.

"Nice place this for a camp, is it not?" said Essie.

"Very; we could not have hit upon a better spot," replied Dick.

"We were talking about your uncle, and I mentioned that he owned The Ace. Were you with him when the horse won the Cup?"

"Yes; but it was the Sandgate Handicap he won with The Ace, not the Cup. The Ace was entered in the Cup, and was heavily backed, but he struck him out, and there was a regular row about it, more especially when he won the Handicap. The Ace could have won the double easily, but I think some of the bookmakers persuaded him to scratch him for the Cup."

"Did you ride him at exercise?" asked Edwin Holt.

"Several times, and a very good horse he was."

"Then you can form some opinion of the chances our horses have when they are properly trained?"

"I can tell whether any of them are as good as The Ace," said Dick.

“And supposing we have one you consider the equal of The Ace?” asked Essie.

“Then you will have a very good horse, for I have heard many people say The Ace was the best of his year,” replied Dick.

## CHAPTER SEVENTH

## *A MOB OF HORSES*

AT four o'clock in the morning the camp was astir, and, as Essie anticipated, the men were nothing loath to take a dip before the business of the day commenced. They knew some hot work lay before them, and determined to make the most of the cool river water before the sun burned down upon them. There was a bend in the river a short distance from the camp which hid them from view, and here they swam about for half an hour before breakfast.

"I think I should like a bathe myself," Essie said to her father.

He did not approve of it, and she refrained, but looked longingly at the water.

By half-past five they were on the move again, and as mile after mile was traversed, and no sign of the horses seen, Edwin Holt commenced to think they would have a long and difficult search for them.

"I think we had better keep to the river course," he said. "They are sure to come here for water sooner or later, and we must be careful not to miss them. I think the best plan will be to leave someone behind, so that if they turn up after we have passed on he can give us warning."

Barry Green agreed with him, and one of the hands was told to ride slowly up and down the river bank for a distance of five or six miles.

"That will cover our rear," said Edwin; "and when we have travelled another ten miles, we can act in a similar way, and that will take up a long stretch of the river."

A halt was made at noon, and the sun was very hot. They rested until the cool of the evening, and then mounted again and continued their search. Essie was becoming impatient; she was anxious for some sport. So far it had been anything but exciting.

They were doomed to pass another night without success, but in the early hours of the following morning they were awakened by a low rumbling sound, which at first resembled thunder, but as it gradually became more distinct, they knew was the galloping of a number of horses.

Saddling up was quickly done, and all anxiously awaited the coming of the mob.

"Sounds like a big lot," said Edwin cheerfully. "I hope we have got right into them all at once; it will save a lot of trouble. You may expect to see some fun now."

Essie's face glowed with excitement, and she settled herself in the saddle, eagerly anticipating a gallop.

"Here they come! here they come!" she said quickly, pointing with her whip in the direction of a cloud of dust, in the midst of which a number

of horses were faintly discerned going at full gallop.

Edwin Holt gave orders for the men to keep as much as possible under cover; but this was a difficult matter, as there was not much chance of hiding.

The mob of horses was headed by a fine-looking bay, and he led the way at a great pace. He was evidently in command, and came on without any fear of danger lurking around.

"If we can catch him, the others will be more easily managed," said Edwin. "He is the leader, and they follow him like a flock of sheep."

He rode up to Barry Green, and pointed the horse out to him.

"We must have him without fail," he said; "it will help us considerably."

"Easier said than done," replied Barry, "but I'll have a good try for it. Let me see; I think Enoch Law will be the best man to help me. He throws the lasso well."

"The very man," replied Edwin. "Between you it ought to be carried out successfully."

Barry spoke to Enoch, who made ready with his lasso, in case it would be required, and the pair stood waiting their opportunity.

The leader charged right up to the river bank before he halted, and the mob pulled up around him. They snorted and panted, but in a few minutes were in the water, splashing and drinking, and thoroughly enjoying themselves after the gallop. It was a

curious and interesting sight to watch them, and they revelled in the cool refreshing river. One by one they came on to the bank again, their coats shining with moisture.

"There are over thirty," said Edwin; "that will be sufficient for our purpose, and they appear to be all ages, shapes, and breeds," he added, laughing.

"They are a very nice lot," said Essie, "but how are we to get them to Glengarry? It is a long way to drive them."

"We shall manage it," said her father, "and you will soon find out that a riderless horse has not much chance with a man well mounted."

By this time the horses evidently sniffed danger in the air. They stood with heads erect, and ears pricked, listening intently, and their nostrils were extended in the act of scenting an enemy. The bay horse, who acted as leader, looked savage. He tossed his head, and pawed the ground, and Essie thought how noble he looked in his rage. He was a handsome stallion, over sixteen hands high, and well made, his shape being almost perfect.

"It is Chance," said her father. "I thought it was when I first saw him."

"Chance!" exclaimed Essie. "I have not seen him since he left Glengarry."

"He must have been roaming about a long time," replied Edwin. "It will do him good to come up for a change."

Chance was a well-bred horse that Edwin Holt

purchased in Brisbane, and some of the best stock on Glengarry had been sired by him.

There was, however, no time to lose if they meant surrounding the mob. The horses were becoming impatient, and it was evident there would soon be a stampede.

Barry Green gave the signal, and the men quickly set their horses in motion and galloped out into the open, spreading out in front of the mob so as to head them off from returning by the way they had come.

"Follow me," said Edwin to his daughter, and she rode after him.

The horses stood looking in surprise at the mounted men, and were evidently waiting for their leader to make a move. Chance seemed to be taking in the scene like a skilful general, and looked round in every direction for a favourable way of escape. This, however, was a difficult matter. The river lay in the rear, the mounted men were in front, and also headed him off to the north of the river; there was nothing for it but to make a rush down stream, and this was precisely what Edwin Holt wanted, as it led them towards Glengarry.

Chance, having made up his mind, set off at a steady pace, the others following, and the men kept their positions alongside, and in the rear. The pace increased as Chance found he could not shake them off, and Essie thoroughly enjoyed the sensation.

"Keep close to me," said her father. "The horses may try to break through when they find it

impossible to get away from us. Chance is a cunning old customer, and it is not the first time he has been at this game. He knows what it means, which probably the bulk of the others do not."

Barry Green and Enoch Law were riding together, keeping their eyes fixed on Chance.

"The old beggar knows the whistle of my rope," said Enoch; "he has had it round his neck before. He's a toughish customer when he finds himself in a tight place."

"We'll manage him if we can get near enough," said Barry.

Their opportunity soon came, and so suddenly that it took them almost unawares. Chance swerved quickly away from the river and dashed between them, nearly upsetting Barry Green as he went past.

"Now's your time," shouted Edwin; but he was too far away for his voice to reach them.

Enoch, however, was all alert. He rode after Chance at a great pace, holding his lasso ready for a curl.

The whole mob had now stampeded through the line, and were doubling back in the direction from which they had come to the river.

"This is a slice of bad luck," said Edwin, "but we must make the best of it."

Essie was heart and soul in the struggle, and the prospect of it being prolonged did not trouble her at all. It was a thrilling experience to ride at full gallop after a mob of flying horses, with the thought that some of the captives might turn out to be real

good thoroughbreds. She was not more than a couple of hundred yards away from them, and could distinguish which horses were galloping in the best style. One bright bay in particular took her fancy. He went over the ground with an easy, sweeping motion that delighted her. She thought he was very like Chance, who was probably his sire.

Dick Edgar was riding close behind her, and she reined in her horse until he came up alongside.

"Look at that bay," she said. "I mean the one on this side galloping by himself. Is he not a beauty? I hope he will not get away from us; he seems the best of the lot."

"He gallops well," said Dick; "and if he makes a bolt of it, I will go after him."

"Don't lose him, whatever you do," she said.

"You shall have him safe at Glengarry if I have to ride him down myself," replied Dick.

Edwin Holt had gone on ahead in a vain attempt to turn the mob back; but the horses were full of running, and it promised to be a hard, stern tussle. From time to time he looked back to see if Essie was safe, and then continued the chase.

At last the horses slackened speed, and some of them fell back beaten; but five or six continued to gallop on, and amongst them were Chance and the bay colt Essie had singled out.

Barry Green and Enoch Law were now drawing to close quarters with Chance, and the latter was straining every nerve to get on terms with him so that he could throw the lasso effectively. Nearer

and nearer he crept up to him, and Essie watched the race with eager eyes.

"Enoch is catching him," she said excitedly. "What a splendid struggle! I wish I was nearer to them," and she urged her horse forward again.

They were all well mounted, and there was very little fear of the remainder of the mob getting away from them.

Edwin Holt left Barry Green and Enoch to continue the chase, and waited for Essie to come up.

At a sign from her father she halted, but Dick Edgar rode on, and as he left her called out:

"I will get the bay colt for you, never fear."

"Good luck to you, Dick!" she cried after him.

"That bay colt can gallop," said her father. "I noticed him some time ago. Dick will have a long chase, I am afraid, before he runs him down. We must wait until he comes back."

"Oh, look, dad!" exclaimed Essie, "Enoch has thrown his lasso."

"And he's got him, too; well done, Enoch!" said Edwin, as he saw Chance pulled up with a jerk.

Enoch had cast his rope with his usual skill. The loop circled over Chance's head, and then slipped down on to his neck. No sooner did the horse feel the rope than he slackened his speed; he had not forgotten his first experience with Enoch's lasso.

"Now we have him," said Enoch, "but be careful. He might try to savage us, and he can be very nasty when he likes. He's not as young as he was,

and he may have had enough of it; we shall soon see."

Carefully handling the rope, Enoch drew up closer to Chance, and kept a wary eye upon him at the same time. The horse was, however, thoroughly blown, and after a short struggle gave in, and was led back to the remainder of the tired-out mob.

While this was taking place, Dick Edgar was riding hard after the colt, who showed no signs of giving out. He did not intend losing him. He meant to capture him, if he had to follow him for miles. He gave no thought to leaving the others behind; he had said he would get the colt for Miss Essie, and he meant to keep his word. He noticed what a splendid galloper he was, and thought he would turn out a good one when properly trained. It commenced to grow dusk rapidly, and he knew there was every prospect of spending the night alone, and renewing his task next day. As for any danger, he never gave it a thought. His sole object was to capture this colt, and take it back to the camp in triumph. The whole of the mob of horses, with the exception of the bay colt Dick Edgar was after, had been captured, and there was but little fear of their breaking away again, especially since Chance was taken.

Edwin Holt did not feel at all uneasy about Dick Edgar, and in reply to Essie said he would be sure to turn up in the morning, and probably bring the colt with him.

CHAPTER  
EIGHTH

*TWO BAY  
COLTS*

DICK EDGAR spent the night alone, and it was his first experience of the vast solitude of these wonderful plains. For some time he could not sleep, and lay on his back, with his saddle for a pillow, looking up at the clear, starry night. How immense it was, and how the stars shone with a brilliancy he had never seen before. Not a sound could be heard, except the low hum of insects, and the occasional stamp of the horse's hoofs as he made his evening meal off the scanty herbage. He did not feel afraid, but a weight of oppression was upon him, which he could not shake off. It was some time before he fell asleep, and he tossed and turned in an uneasy slumber.

He awoke suddenly, and lay still, listening intently. He thought he heard the sound of footfalls on the ground, but they were very low and peculiarly quiet. It was like the movement of many barefooted men shuffling along at a slow pace.

What could it mean? Were the blacks about, and if so, what would befall him if they discovered him? He had no weapon with him, and was helpless. He sat up and listened again, and the sound seemed to come nearer. He was unable to see for any

considerable distance in the dim light, but as he peered into it, he observed shadows flitting about with ghostly quietness.

"Blacks," he muttered; and lay flat down on his stomach and watched them.

There were many of them, and they seemed to be on the move from one camp to another, perhaps making for the river, and if so, they would be likely to come upon the camp from Glengarry.

He considered how far he was away from them. The colt had travelled at a great pace, and he must be some miles away. Would it be necessary to warn them? They might all be asleep, tired out after the day's work, and in that case the blacks would probably pounce upon them before they could make any defence. In that case, what would be the fate of Miss Essie? He could not bear to think of it; the mere idea of her falling into their hands roused him to action. He must, at any risk, saddle his horse, and ride back at top speed in the direction of the camp, or where he expected it to be.

The blacks were travelling faster now, and luckily had not seen him; at least, he fancied so. He was mistaken. The Gilbert River blacks had keen eyes, and were accustomed to see almost in the dark. The colt Dick had given chase to had galloped into the midst of the blacks' camp before he was aware of their presence, and then, with a snort of alarm, had wheeled round and made off as fast as he could in his tired condition. From this the blacks knew there must be a party of men not far off, and that the colt had

broken through the line as the mob was rounded up.

This at once stirred them to action, and they broke up the camp, and tracked the horse until it led them to the spot where Dick had given up the chase for the night. The king of the tribe saw him before he was aware of their presence, and "Charlie" was a cunning, clever black, of a superior mental calibre to the majority of his fellows. When he saw Dick lying asleep, and his horse close by him, he came to the conclusion he was only one of a party of white men, as he never anticipated he was alone.

He checked his followers, and gave orders for them to surround him, making a wide circuit, in case the camp was some distance away, and then instructing them to close in gradually and swiftly. By this means he hoped to secure them all.

His surmise as to the camp was wrong, and his plan was thwarted by Dick himself, for no sooner had he made up his mind to give warning of the danger at hand than, heedless of consequences, he jumped up, flung the saddle on to his horse, and tightened the girths.

His movements were seen by the blacks nearest to him, and with a yell they rushed forward to stop him. Dick, fortunately for himself, was young and active, and he sprang into the saddle and set his horse going at top speed.

He felt something whistle around his head, and ducked quickly, avoiding a well-thrown boomerang,

and after this came a shower of spears, one of which made a deep flesh wound near his horse's hip, the pain rousing him to madness. Dick saw blacks ahead of him, and looking to the right and left saw he was surrounded. There was nothing for it but to charge at full speed and break through.

His blood was up, but he was not afraid, although he would have been glad of a good revolver.

Charlie was in front and saw him coming. The black grinned, and raised his heavy nullah-nullah, which looked capable of felling a bullock.

Dick had no desire to encounter such a formidable antagonist, and steered his horse to the left, in order to avoid him. This was not so easy as it looked, for Charlie was nimble and swift of foot, and he realised the situation immediately. Dropping his nullah-nullah, he crouched and hurled his boomerang at Dick. The dangerous weapon circled in the air, and it seemed well-nigh impossible for the rider to escape it ; but he did, by a hair's-breadth.

Dick was past the line of blacks now, but they came on after him at a great pace, yelling and throwing their spears. It was well for him he had a good mount, or he would have had no chance against these fleet-footed men, whose howls of rage grew more savage as they saw their prey escaping.

Dick rode on, and in the course of an hour or so saw the camp which his companions had pitched for the night. No one was stirring, that he perceived, but as he came nearer the sound of his horse galloping roused them.

Edwin Holt recognised him, and thought there must be something wrong, as there were no signs of the colt, and Dick's horse was covered with foam and blood.

Essie quickly dressed and came out of her tent, and saw them standing round him.

In a hurried, breathless way Dick gave an account of his adventure, and said the blacks would be certain to follow his track, and they were in considerable numbers.

"You have behaved in a very plucky way," said Edwin Holt, "and although the danger may not be so great as you imagine, your warning must not be neglected. Strike the camp and let us make tracks; we shall have to leave the bay colt for another day."

It did not take long for them to get on the march, and Edwin Holt rightly anticipated that the blacks would not follow them far.

"Those fellows gave me a rare turn," said Dick. "If they had caught me asleep it would have been all up with me, and as it was I had a narrow squeak."

"I am sorry you ran such a risk," said Essie.

"And I am still more sorry I have not captured the colt; but I'll get him some day, never fear," said Dick. "He is a rare galloper. I never got on terms with him; and how far he went after I left off chasing him I do not know."

"He will suit our purpose if we get him," said Essie. "A galloper such as he is cannot be found every day."

The mob of horses went along quietly enough now, and Enoch led Chance in front, which induced them to follow without any trouble.

In the distance Essie saw a solitary horse standing, and pointed him out to her father. As they drew nearer, he saw the mob, and came cantering towards the horses.

"By all that's wonderful, it is the bay colt you went after," said Edwin Holt. "How on earth did he get here?"

Dick could hardly believe it, and yet it was true. This was the colt, sure enough, that had led him into danger; but, as Edwin Holt said, "How did he come here?"

There was no need to attempt to capture him on this occasion, for he galloped voluntarily into the midst of the other horses, and seemed glad to be there again.

"That is an easy way of securing him," said Edwin. "He seems fairly tired out."

Barry Green rode up, and Edwin asked him how he accounted for their coming across the colt in such a spot.

"It probably happened in this way," replied Barry. "When Dick gave up following him, he may have gone on until he headed right into the blacks' camp. In that case, he would endeavour to get out of it as quickly as possible, and gallop off in any direction. These horses have a horror of the blacks. I fancy that is how we came across him."

"It sounds probable," said Edwin Holt. "What do you think, Essie?"

"My opinion is not worth much, I have had such a little experience; but I think Barry's surmise is no doubt correct. The main thing is that we have him, and it matters very little how he came here," she replied.

"He has done me out of a capture," said Dick, laughing, "and I cannot claim any credit for securing him."

"On the contrary," replied Edwin; "if you had not gone after him, we should have lost him altogether. So you can still take some credit for his presence with the mob."

The remainder of the ride to Glengarry was uneventful, and the horses were safely driven into the yards.

Chance was stabled for a time alone, and Edwin Holt was doubtful about turning him out again, as his stock were evidently good, and with careful mating he might sire something quite out of the common.

Lydia Barker was very glad to see Essie safely home again, and she was horrified when she heard about the blacks and the narrow escape of Dick Edgar.

"It makes me shudder to think what might have befallen you," she said to Essie.

"I am very sorry I did not see the blacks," she replied. "It must be exciting to meet a tribe on the warpath."

"And extremely dangerous. I hope you will not run any more such risks," said Lydia.

"Not for some time," replied Essie. "We have made a good haul, and it will be a matter of weeks selecting the best horses. If I find nothing to my liking, then we may have to go in search of others."

"Then I sincerely hope you will be satisfied," replied Lydia.

Essie was tired the day after their arrival home and did not take much persuading to rest; but she was anxious to get to work as soon as possible.

Dick and Barry, after a considerable amount of trouble, managed to halter the bay colt and separate him from the others, so that when Essie came out to make her inspection she had a good view of him without any trouble. Her father was with her, and he waited to hear her opinion of him.

Essie admired the colt more than ever, now he stood alone, and she saw how well he was shaped.

"How old is he?" she asked.

"Three years; not more," replied Barry. "I have examined his mouth."

"He is remarkably well grown," said her father. "With care and grooming he will develop into a gem, I think."

"And when he has been in training a few weeks you will hardly know him," said Essie.

"Shall you gallop him with the other one?" he asked.

"Of course. It is awkward having no names for them. What shall we call them?"

"Call this one Tearaway," said her father, laughing. "It will be a good name after the experience Dick had with him."

"That will do," replied Essie; "and now for The Monk's son, what shall we call him?"

"Jovial; how's that?" said Edwin Holt.

"Capital," replied Essie. "Tearaway and Jovial—two first-rate names."

"And I hope they will turn out winners," he replied. "You had better hand Tearaway over to Barry Green to break in for you."

"You will have to be careful with him," Essie said.

"I know how to handle a youngster like him," replied Barry.

"He is three years old, and no doubt has a will of his own," said Edwin.

"I will guarantee in a month he will be quieter than Jovial," said Barry.

"I hope so," answered Edwin, with a laugh. "Jovial does not belie his name."

## CHAPTER NINTH

## *THE FIRST GALLOP*

BARRY GREEN had a more difficult task with Tearaway than he anticipated. As Edwin Holt suggested, he had a will of his own, and made good use of it. Gradually, however, with patience and perseverance, Barry got him into shape, and as the colt submitted to be handled, it was not difficult to see he was a good one.

Essie looked on, and wished she could take a hand in the taming process ; but it was far too dangerous work for her, so she had to remain contented and wait until he had sobered down.

About a month after the mob had arrived at Glengarry the weeding-out was completed. Half-a-dozen good-looking colts and fillies were selected to join Essie's pair, and the remainder her father intended to take to Brisbane for sale. The breaking-in of this wild lot caused considerable fun, and several of the men engaged in the task had narrow escapes.

Dick Edgar was not slow in showing that he had made no boast when he said he could ride well. He selected the most difficult horses to handle, and was so successful that Edwin Holt knew he had secured a very clever man.

"I had no idea he was so skilful," he said. "He handles a horse better than any of the men—not even excepting Barry."

"You had better keep that opinion to yourself," said Essie, "or there will be trouble with Barry. He has one failing: he is jealous, and likes to think he is indispensable."

"And a very worthy sentiment," said Lydia. "It shows he has self-respect—more than I gave him credit for."

"Barry is a very good man," replied Edwin, "but he requires to be toned down occasionally. He has sense enough to know Dick is a splendid horseman, although he may not care to be told of it."

"There is ample work for both of them," said Essie, "and Dick is to have charge of Tearaway, and Barry will look after Jovial."

"It will create a spirit of friendly rivalry between them which will be beneficial," said her father. "There will be a desperate struggle to win the first race, and I think Barry has the better chance."

"So you consider Jovial better than Tearaway?" said Essie.

"Yes," he replied; "at least, so far as I can judge up to the present."

"I think you are mistaken," said Essie. "Jovial has had more time. When Tearaway has been put through his paces he will prove a real good one."

Her father was amused at the interest she took

in the horses, and encouraged her in her endeavours, which did not meet with Lydia Barker's approval.

Dick Edgar rode Tearaway several good gallops with Jovial, Barry riding, and at last it was decided he was safe for Essie to mount. She had eagerly looked forward to this time, and felt a tremor of excitement as she prepared to ride him for the first time.

She was not at all nervous, and patted the colt's neck before she was assisted into the saddle.

Tearaway was full of life, and Essie handled him carefully. Dick mounted Jovial, and Barry Green Tattoo, another horse that had been drafted from the mob.

Tattoo was a six-year-old, and his breaking-in had consequently been difficult. Half-a-dozen years of freedom, roaming about at his own sweet will, had not prepared him to submit easily to the control of man. He was a bit of a savage, and had given Barry one or two nasty nips with his teeth, which had been resented in a manner that astonished him. His manners had mended since the first time he was taken in hand, and he was more tractable with Barry than anyone else.

Edwin Holt had a course marked out as a training ground, where the going was generally good, the ground being moist and not subject to cracking by the heat of the sun. Posts marked the various distances, and it was a good two miles round, there being no sharp turns. He was present to see the first good gallop between the trio, and was anxious

as to how Tearaway would behave with Essie as his pilot.

He looked at her proudly as she sat astride the horse, and noticed how strong and healthy she seemed. Tearaway was anxious to be off, and in a few minutes the three were sent away for a two mile gallop.

Jovial made the running, and Tattoo kept close alongside Tearaway. Barry was watching Essie's mount in order to see that she came to no harm. It was a rattling good gallop, and the three horses all shaped well. Tearaway was in front at the end of the spin, but Essie was a much lighter weight than either Dick or Barry. She was delighted at her success and in love with her mount.

"I told you he was a good one," she said enthusiastically. "Didn't he go well?"

"Splendidly," replied her father; "and he is as good as he looks. But you must not be too sanguine; recollect you are a much lighter weight than Dick or Barry."

"I never thought of that," she replied. "Of course it would make a difference; we must try and have a gallop at even weights."

"When I go to Brisbane I will bring back some proper saddles and weights," said her father, "and then we can soon find out which is the best horse. I think a trip to Brisbane would do you good, Essie. How would you like to go with me? You are developing into a young lady, and it is quite time you saw a little of city life; it is such a complete

change from the loneliness of Glengarry and life in the bush."

"Do take me, please," said Essie, delighted at the prospect. "But you must not think I find Glengarry lonely; it is anything but that."

"And Lydia had better go with us. We can leave Barry in charge, and it will be far better for you to have her for a companion, as I shall have a good deal of business to do."

This arrangement naturally met with Lydia Barker's approval. She had been at Glengarry a long time, and the prospect of being in a large town again was pleasant.

Dick Edgar was selected to go in charge of the horses, although he demurred at first, as he had no desire to meet his uncle again. Edwin Holt, however, assured him that Black Tommy should not harm him, and said:

"I have more influence with him than you think. I can touch his pocket, and where that is concerned he is always willing to listen to reason; I do not know whether you have found it so?"

"He is tight-fisted with his money," said Dick, smiling. "It did not take long to find that out."

"And while we are there we can see about entering the horses for some of the Brisbane races. I do not suppose there will be any difficulty about the pedigrees, for it will be impossible to give the correct breeding with any degree of certainty. I know two or three members of the Queensland Turf Club Committee, and I have no doubt they will be

only too pleased to do all in their power to help us," said Edwin Holt.

"And there will be a race meeting at Eagle Farm about the time we are there," said Dick.

"That will be delightful," said Essie, clapping her hands. "I have never seen a real horse-race, only two or three small events at Caroo, and those do not count."

"You are rather hard on the Caroo folk," laughed her father. "I am sure they do their best with the material they have to work upon. Ask Barry what his opinion is of the Caroo Cup."

Essie laughed heartily. The Caroo Cup was a sore point with Barry. It was his first mount in anything with the pretension of being called a race, and he had made sure of winning it. He rode Dr. Gavin Mashin's Pickles, and the worthy medico was very anxious to secure the trophy, which was valued at ten pounds, but would probably have been looked at askance by a respectable pawnbroker who was contented with ten per cent. profit. Despite its nominal value, the Caroo Cup was a coveted trophy in the district, and there were generally a dozen or so runners for it. Dr. Gavin Mashin resided at Cumberland, but he worked the whole of the district for many miles round. He was a thorough sportsman, and a great friend of Edwin Holt's; as for Essie, she did pretty much as she liked with him, and he acknowledged it was a pleasure and a privilege to do her behests.

It was Essie who secured Barry the mount on

Pickles, and Dr. Gavin was assured it was impossible to obtain a more competent rider.

The great day arrived, and Barry Green, resplendent in the doctor's scarlet jacket, proudly mounted Pickles and rode him, with conscious superiority, before the bevy of country damsels assembled to do honour to the occasion.

Alas for Barry's reputation and the doctor's hopes, Pickles proved himself a perfect rogue. He refused to try and win, and Barry had the mortification of plodding along in the rear, with no prospect of improving his position. Instead of Pickles being first, he was last, and as the doctor's horse was the favourite, Barry came in for a volley of hoots and groans at the conclusion of the race. He was accused of pulling Pickles, and divers other misdeeds.

"Pull him!" said the irate Barry savagely, "I wish I'd had to pull him. He didn't want pulling. What he wanted was someone behind to shove him along."

Dr. Gavin soundly rated Barry, who retorted that if he'd known what sort of a brute Pickles was, he'd have seen him far enough before he accepted the mount.

"The beast is not worth feeding," said Barry. "Take my advice, doctor: give him away to some patient who hasn't paid his bill—that will settle it; or, best of all, ride him out somewhere and lose him."

It was some months before the doctor and Barry were on speaking terms again, and the mere mention

of the Caroo Cup caused a fierce glow to spread over Barry's face. This was the story of the Caroo Cup Edwin Holt told Dick Edgar, and Essie said:

"If you wish to remain on good terms with Barry, never mention its name, or allude to Pickles in any shape or form."

"I will remember," said Dick, smiling. "I can quite imagine Barry's state of mind. To be on a favourite that cuts up badly is a most unenviable position. It is generally the rider who is blamed, and not the horse."

"I wonder what Dr. Gavin will think when he hears of your training experiments," said Edwin Holt.

"He will be interested in them, and I am sure if we run any horses in Brisbane he will be there," said Essie.

"That's not at all improbable," replied her father. "What will his patients do in his absence?"

"Doctor themselves," replied Essie.

"And perhaps recover as quickly as they would if he attended them," laughed Edwin.

"Dr. Mashin was considered a clever man when I was in the hospital with him," said Lydia.

"So he is now, my dear," replied Essie, smiling, "but he speaks his mind too freely to please some of his patients."

"He was always very straightforward and outspoken," said Lydia.

"And very attentive to the charming nurses, no doubt," said Essie.

Lydia coloured slightly as she replied :

"I always found him very kind, and he never thought it a trouble to explain anything to us."

"A most congenial occupation I am sure," said Essie. "I commence to see why he came into our district ; he no doubt wished to continue explaining to Miss Lydia Barker."

## CHAPTER TENTH

## *A TRAINER'S FANCY*

BRISBANE appeared to Essie to be a very large city indeed, and to her unaccustomed eyes the number of people seemed immense. The wide streets and large buildings were strange to her, and she was never tired of looking in the shop windows and watching the bustling crowd passing up and down Queen Street. The Queensland capital at that time was prosperous, and the colony generally shared in it. The wave of depression had not yet passed over the land, nor had the terrible floods made havoc with property, wrecked many homes, cost many lives, and done a fabulous amount of damage. Her father was well known in the city, and his frequent visits were anticipated by a variety of people anxious to secure good horses.

The Glengarry breed was held in high esteem, and many of the best carriage horses to be seen in Brisbane were bred by Edwin Holt. He seldom met with any difficulty in disposing of them, and Tom Edgar's stables, where the best horses were on view, were thronged with prospective buyers.

When Tom Edgar heard his nephew was with Edwin Holt, he resented it at first, and said he must be handed over to him.

"The young rascal smashed my head, and he ought to suffer for it," growled Tom. "He very nearly did for me."

"He must have been driven to it," replied Edwin. "Since he has been in my employ, I have found him quiet and well-behaved, and he is a clever lad with horses."

"So he is, and I taught him all he knows, the ungrateful young varmint!" said Tom. "A nice return he has made me. I took him in when he was homeless, and just as he commenced to be useful he rounded on me and cleared out. You can't approve of that, surely, Mr. Holt?"

"I have heard your version, also his," replied Edwin, "and I am not at all surprised he retaliated. You had no business to thrash him."

"A sound thrashing did no harm when I was a lad," said Tom.

"Probably you deserved all you got," replied Edwin.

Tom Edgar had no desire to be on bad terms with Edwin Holt, whose presence in Brisbane generally put money into his pocket. After raising many objections to Dick remaining with his present employer, he gave way; but he vowed he would be even with his nephew some day, and pay back the blow he had received.

Dick was relieved when he heard Edwin Holt had pacified his uncle, and that it was safe for him to go to the yards and look after the horses.

It was, however, with somewhat of a tremor he

saw Black Tommy approaching him on his first appearance there.

His uncle gruffly bade him good morning, and scowled at him in a way that boded ill; but Dick soon saw he had no intention of molesting him. Although Tom Edgar would have been delighted to punish Dick, he had no intention of losing money by satisfying his feelings of revenge. A dozen of Edwin Holt's best horses were in his stables, and their owner paid well for them; moreover, Tom Edgar received a liberal commission for any sales he effected. Although he was unpopular, his stables were the best in the city, and he had a certain amount of standing accordingly. He had a considerable fortune for a man in his position, and owned several race-horses, which were in training at Eagle Farm, and stabled at Hendra under the care of Luke Kearns, who had formerly been in charge of a well-known stud on the Darling Downs.

Luke Kearns was clever, and not over-scrupulous, so he suited Tom Edgar admirably. He had received one severe reprimand from the authorities, and they hinted that if there was any further occasion for complaint his license would be cancelled. This made him more careful, for he had no desire to be banished from the turf. At the same time, he could not refrain from dabbling in doubtful transactions, and it was more than suspected he had a share in several ponies and Galloways running at unregistered meetings. This was, however, difficult to prove, and when

questioned he strenuously denied it. Tom Edgar could have thrown some light on the subject, but it was not to his interests to do so.

At some of these Galloway meetings some bare-faced transactions occurred. The weights, on more than one occasion, had been cleverly tampered with, and Tom Edgar generally won money on such occasions. When the exposure took place, he wriggled out of the trouble, but some of the "mud" stuck, and he could not get rid of it.

Luke Kearn was also a shrewd judge of horses, and there was no better man at summing up form. He was seldom far out in weighing up a handicap, and altogether Tom Edgar found the partnership with him exceedingly profitable. The horses brought up from Glengarry on this occasion Edgar thought were better bred than any he had seen from the station before. They had more of the thoroughbred about them, and he knew sufficient of the ways of the big breeders up-country to surmise that good blood was running in their veins.

He was aware that Chance was at Glengarry, and also two more blood stallions. This was sufficient to give him good ground for classing these horses as well-bred.

He drove out to Hendra, and brought Luke Kearn back with him, and they carefully inspected the horses.

Luke was a taciturn man, and never wasted many words, generally waiting until he was spoken to before making remarks. Tom Edgar watched him

as he looked at the horses, but failed to get much satisfaction from his scrutiny, although he fancied the trainer took more trouble than usual with his inspection.

"What do you think of them?" asked Edgar.

"All right! not much to grumble at. A very even lot," was the reply.

This was not sufficient for Tom Edgar, who knew Luke must be cross-questioned before any information could be obtained from him.

"That is Mr. Holt's opinion; he thinks they ought to bring a good price," said Edgar.

"What he thinks, and what they will fetch is quite a different matter," replied the trainer.

"Are any of them worth buying?" said Tom.

"They'll not have a very ready sale if they are not."

"You know what I mean," said Tom Edgar.

"I heard what you said."

"You are awfully close. Why don't you speak out?"

"I don't see any occasion for shouting and making a row," said the trainer.

"I did not ask you to shout; I want your opinion. Are any of those horses worth buying by us?"

"Oh, that's what you mean!" exclaimed Luke.

"Yes; and there was no occasion for any explanation."

"I always like to be sure of my ground," replied Luke. "What is the good of an opinion if you have no reasons to back it up."

"Not much," replied Tom Edgar, "but you always know what you are talking about."

"I hope so; that's one reason I keep quiet. The less you say the less your chance of making a fool of yourself."

Tom Edgar was impatient, and said quickly:

"Some of these horses are thoroughbreds, or not far off it."

"They look a bit that way," replied Luke.

"That old stallion, Chance, is at Glengarry, and one or two more."

"Chance was a dashed good horse," replied Luke.

"There's one four-year-old here resembles him very much."

"You mean that brown horse in the third stall from the top?" said Luke.

"Yes; so you have noticed him?"

"I fancied he might be worth buying at a price."

"Then why the deuce did you not say so?"

"Because I was not asked."

Tom Edgar knew from experience it was no use losing his temper with Luke Kearns. It not only gave the trainer the advantage, but it afforded him amusement, and he had a quiet way of edging his victim on until he became ridiculous.

"And what may you consider a fair price?" asked Edgar.

"You mean the amount I would give for him?"

"Yes."

"That requires consideration. If you are going

halves in the purchase, I might spring a bit," said Luke.

"A nice way of doing business," said Tom Edgar angrily.

"I mean two can afford to pay more than one," replied the trainer.

"And what is he worth, if I go in with you?"

"A couple of hundred; but we shall get him for less."

"That's a stiff price for a horse we do not know the breeding of. He may not be thoroughbred."

The trainer smiled as he replied :

"There's not much doubt about it; but even if he is not, he is a good horse, and worth the money."

"Shall I try and buy him?"

"Yes, and we will go halves."

"Are there any others you care about?"

"He'll do. One at a time, just to see how he turns out," said Luke.

When Edwin Holt came down to the stables, he brought two buyers with him, and Tom Edgar, who was hanging about, eager to catch a hint as to the prices asked, was surprised when he heard a fairly big bid given for the lot.

Edwin Holt shook his head, and said he could make more out of them if sold separately.

Tom Edgar debated whether it would be discreet to say he had a customer for number three. If he remained quiet he might lose him, and this he had no desire to do, because Luke Kearn seldom expressed his opinion in favour

of a horse without it being well borne out by the result.

Edwin Holt and his customers looked at the brown horse for some time, and it was evident they were trying to strike a bargain.

He shuffled about, and tried to attract Edwin Holt's attention, and at last succeeded.

"Do you wish to speak to me?" asked Mr. Holt.

"Only a moment; I will not detain you," said Tom.

Edwin Holt crossed over to him, and Edgar said: "I have had an offer for that horse."

"The brown one?"

"Yes; number three."

"How much?"

"A hundred and fifty," said Tom.

Edwin Holt laughed as he replied:

"It will take double that to buy him. I fancy he is by Chance; you remember him?"

"Yes; a very fair horse."

"As good as they can be got, you mean," said Edwin Holt, as he turned away.

"One moment," said Tom Edgar. "Don't sell him this morning. Give my man the first refusal."

"At three hundred?" said Edwin.

"It is a lot of money, but I'll see if I can get it," said Tom.

"Very well, then; I will keep him until to-morrow morning," replied Edwin, and smiled to himself as he thought:

"Luke Kearn has been talking it over with you. I saw him in town this morning. If you want the brown colt, you will have to pay my price for him."

Tom Edgar lost no time in riding over to Hendra to see the trainer.

"What brings you here?" asked Luke.

"Business."

"So I suppose. About the brown horse?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Holt wants a stiff price for him, and it's my opinion he'll get it. There were buyers for him in the yard this morning."

"How much did he ask?"

"Three hundred."

"Give it him," was the unexpected reply.

"Do you mean it?" asked Tom, astonished.

"He's not dear at a hundred and fifty apiece."

"You must have a good opinion of him; it is a risk," said Edgar.

"Buyers of horses generally take some risk."

"He's not properly broken."

"All the better; he is not likely to have any bad manners. I prefer to teach him myself," said Luke.

"It is a lot of money," remonstrated Edgar.

"And he is a good horse; I am sure of it," replied Luke.

"In that case I will bid for him; you are seldom so sanguine."

"Take my word for it, if we get him, even for three hundred, we shall have a bargain."

"They may have a better left behind," said Edgar.

"And what of that? They are never likely to find out how good he is in that God-forsaken country," said Luke Kearn.

CHAPTER  
ELEVENTH

*"YOU WILL BE  
SHOCKED"*

THE Queensland Turf Club meeting took place at Eagle Farm during Edwin Holt's stay in Brisbane. It was Essie's first race meeting, and the novel, stirring sight roused her enthusiasm. The races excited her, and a desperate finish for the Moreton Handicap, between Red Streak and Nettle, gave her an insight into the fascinations of the sport.

Essie was an exceedingly charming young lady, and she was introduced to several people who did all in their power to make her visit enjoyable.

It so happened that Red Streak, who won the Moreton Handicap, was owned by a young squatter named Alan Rolt, whose father had been a friend of Edwin Holt's. Alan Rolt owned a large stud farm near Ipswich, and also a considerable quantity of land near Toowoomba, on the Downs. His father left him very well off, and with the help of his sister Milly, who kept house for him, he led a pleasant life, and was not overburdened with work.

Essie and Milly soon became friends, and although she was much younger than himself, Alan admired Edwin Holt's daughter, and thought her an exceedingly pretty girl.

Essie and Lydia Barker accompanied the Rolts to

the races on the day Red Streak won the Handicap, and naturally there was much enthusiasm over the victory. Nettle was owned by Tom Edgar, and trained by Kearns, and Edwin Holt was not at all sorry at his defeat; as for Dick, he was delighted Red Streak won.

Alan Rolt's horse was not much fancied, and a good dividend on the totalisator enhanced the satisfaction at the win.

Essie's enthusiasm knew no bounds when the yellow jacket was first past the post, and heartily congratulated Alan on the success of his colours.

"It reminds me of old times," said Edwin Holt, "when your father's horses won many good races carrying the yellow jacket. I am glad his luck has not deserted you."

"My father was an excellent judge of horses," replied Alan, "and Red Streak is bred from a favourite old mare of his."

"I think I can guess her name," said Edwin Holt, with a smile. "Is it Medusa?"

"Yes; how did you know?"

"Red Streak resembles her in many ways."

"He does; but you must have a good memory, for it is some years since Medusa ran her last race," said Alan.

"My father seldom forgets," said Essie. "He has a wonderful memory."

Before leaving Brisbane, Edwin Holt and Essie, accompanied by Lydia Barker, paid a visit to Alan

Rolt's home near Ipswich, and met with a most hospitable reception.

Milly Rolt was not slow to perceive her brother's partiality for Essie Holt's society ; nor did she cavil at his choice, as she had a real liking for her.

Edwin Holt also perceived Alan's partiality for his daughter, and he thought that when she was a few years older his friend's son would not by any means be an undesirable match for her. At present, however, Essie was much too young for matrimonial projects to be broached to her.

She took a keen delight in her visit to Capella, the name of Alan's home, and he was eager to point out its attractions. The model stud farm interested her, and old Medusa came in for a great share of attention.

"What a fine old mare !" exclaimed Essie, when she saw her quietly grazing in a paddock, with a foal at foot.

"She was a champion in her best days," replied Alan ; "and my father won no end of weight-for-age races, when she was handicapped too heavily for the other events."

"It was a shame not to give her a chance in handicaps," said Essie.

"I agree with you ; but really she was so good, it took a very heavy weight to stop her. I recollect her winning easily, over a mile, with 10 st. 9 lbs. up ; and I shall never forget the cheers that greeted her victory. I was quite a lad, but it made a great impression upon me ; I verily believe it was Medusa gave me my first taste for racing."

"Has my father told you about the horses I have in training at Glengarry?" asked Essie.

"No, he has not mentioned it."

Essie launched into a glowing description of Jovial, Tearaway, and Tattoo, at which Alan was much amused.

"They were bred in the bush, all of them—and so, for the matter of that, am I—and you will say they are a credit to our country when you see them, as you probably will some day," said Essie.

"They must be real good horses, from the description you have given me," he said, "and I hope to see them. Shall you bring them up to Brisbane to run? If so, I hope you will make use of Capella, and stable them here. We have an excellent track, and it is not so public as Eagle Farm."

"It would be nice to have them here," said Essie, showing the pleasure she felt in her expression, "and it is very good of you to make the offer."

Alan felt he would be amply repaid if Essie came to Capella with them, and said:

"I only make one stipulation."

"Not a hard one, I hope," replied Essie.

"I trust you will not think it so," he answered, with a smile.

"What is it?"

"That you and your father come with them."

"I think I can safely promise that," she replied.

"Then I shall indeed be delighted," he said, looking at her admiringly.

"I have sole charge of these horses," she said, "and

you must not be shocked when I tell you I ride them in their gallops."

"You!" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes, poor weak me," she answered, with a merry laugh. "Very shocking and unladylike, is it not?—at least, Miss Barker says so."

"Then I do not agree with her," he replied. "I am sure you could not do anything unladylike."

"Thank you," answered Essie, smiling. "I thought from your exclamation of surprise you were disagreeably astonished."

"I certainly am astonished, but not disagreeably. I admire your pluck and nerve; you must be very courageous, for race-horses are not particularly safe conveyances," he said.

"I can astonish you still more," she went on, with childish glee, and full of roguish fun; after all, she was a young girl, not yet out of her teens.

"I am willing to be astonished," he replied, laughing. "Do not keep me in suspense."

"You will be shocked, I am sure you will," said Essie roguishly.

"You cannot possibly shock me," he replied.

"Oh, yes, I can; I am a dreadful girl when I like."

He shook his head as he said: "I will not believe it."

"You must."

"Never! Please proceed to shock me, but not too severely at first."

"I ride my horses like a boy; there, now you have it. Are you not horrified? Do you not

consider me a disgrace to my sex?" said Essie, watching his face.

"Is that all?" he said. "It is very strange, no doubt, but I am not in the least shocked; on the contrary, I am anxious to see how skilful you are in the saddle."

"That's very nice of you," replied Essie. "I quite expected you would cut my acquaintance after such a confession. Whatever would your sister say?"

He laughed heartily, and Essie pouted and said:

"Please do not make fun of me; I am sure she will think it very horrid."

"Ask her what she thinks of it," he said.

"I dare not," replied Essie. "She would be horrified."

"I promise you she will not. Do as I request, please."

"Ask your sister's opinion?"

"Yes; I am sure you will be satisfied with her answer."

"In that case I will; but if she lectures me, woe betide you!" laughed Essie.

Edwin Holt, who had been to Brisbane, joined them, and recognised Medusa again.

"The old mare looks wonderfully well," he said. "What is the foal by?"

"Buckthorpe," replied Alan.

"Then he ought to be a good one, and he looks it."

"I think he will turn out all right; but one can

never tell. Sometimes the most promising foals are worthless."

"I do not think Medusa could throw a bad one."

"Nor do I," replied Alan. "Essie has just been giving me an account of her exploits at Glengarry, and I have extracted a promise from her that when the horses come south you must bring them to Capella."

"You promised that in my name, Essie?" laughed her father.

"No, in my own; but I knew you would consent," she replied.

"I am afraid Mr. Rolt is somewhat astonished at a young lady training horses," said Edwin Holt.

"On the contrary, I admire her pluck," said Alan, "and wish her every success. You will come to Capella when you bring them down to Brisbane, will you not?"

Edwin Holt noticed the anxiety in his tone, and thought:

"Essie has made a conquest early in life. I hope it will all turn out for the best, and bring happiness to my little girl."

He cordially accepted Alan's offer, and thanked him for his hospitality.

"Have you done any business in Brisbane this morning?" asked Essie.

"I have sold all the horses at Edgar's stables at good prices."

"The brown horse as well?"

"Yes; and I fancy I know who has bought him.

Tom Edgar gave three hundred for him for a customer; so he said, but I believe he purchased him on his own account and Luke Kearn's," said Edwin.

"He must have good looks to recommend him if Luke has gone in for him," said Alan. "He does not throw money away, and three hundred is a stiff price."

"The horse is worth it; but I do not like the idea of Tom Edgar having the handling of him," replied Edwin.

"What does it matter, now you have got your price?" said Essie.

"It would be curious if we brought Jovial and Tearaway to Brisbane, to run at Eagle Farm, and they were beaten by a horse bred at Glengarry," he said.

"That is not at all likely to happen," said Essie. "The horse you have sold may be a fair animal, but he cannot have any chance with mine."

"I hope not," replied her father. "It would be very annoying if he turned out as good as that."

The evenings at Capella passed pleasantly.

Milly Rolt sang and played well, and Lydia Barker had vocal abilities. Edwin Holt was fond of music, and as he listened to Milly Rolt he thought what a sweet, sympathetic voice she had. Moreover, she was a good-looking woman, two years older than her brother, and had made herself very agreeable to Edwin and his daughter. Essie's father was only just turned forty, and in the prime of life. He was a

strong, healthy man, and one calculated to favourably impress a woman with a sense of security in his presence. Milly liked him, and took pleasure in his society. She was pleased when her brother told her of Essie's promise to stay at Capella, and of her father's acquiescence. He also waxed enthusiastic over Essie's powers as a trainer, and gave a glowing account of the exploits of the Glengarry men in rounding up the mob, and of Dick Edgar's chase after Tearaway, all of which had been related to him by Essie.

"He has omitted one thing," said Essie, smiling. "I am afraid you will be shocked when I tell you I ride astride."

Milly laughed merrily as she replied: "So do I, and isn't it jolly good fun?"

"Oh, you dear!" exclaimed Essie, "I am so glad. No wonder your brother told me to ask your opinion on the question, and promised you would not lecture me."

CHAPTER  
TWELFTH

*THE CHIEF  
OFFICER*

MERRY days, happy days, were those Essie Holt spent at Brisbane, and at Capella. She revelled in the new life opened up to her, and so thoroughly did she enjoy herself and enter heart and soul into everything, that her father wondered, with a sigh of regret, whether she would find Glengarry dull and lonely on her return. Would he find it lonely? was the next thought, and this aroused a train of reflections. He had never considered marrying again, although at times he fancied it would be better if he did so, and then comely Lydia Barker had seemed a suitable choice. Since he had seen Milly Rolt, however, he no longer thought of Lydia, who saw his changed feelings toward her, and regretted it, for she admired and respected him, and loved Essie like a daughter.

Milly Rolt was many years younger than Edwin Holt, but he did not give that a thought. Although forty years of age he did not look it, nor did he feel any signs of age creeping upon him. He had never felt better in his life, or more active, and he saw nothing disparaging in years between Milly and himself.

Being a sensible, observant woman, Milly Rolt did

not disguise from herself that Edwin Holt was ready to fall in love with her, even if he had not already done so. His preference for her flattered her, and had there been no one else she would probably have encouraged him.

Although Milly Rolt was sensible, and well able to take care of herself, there was one weak spot in her armour, and that was her infatuation for a man not in any way worthy of her love or esteem.

Lance Loyd was chief officer of the *Karumba*, and he had been promised the next vacant captaincy in the company. He was a smart, good-looking man, but unscrupulous where his interests were concerned, and heartless in his flirtations, which had been numerous. The *Karumba* carried many servants to Brisbane, and assisted passages were granted to suitable young women by the Government. Many of these persons were sent out alone and unprotected, and more than one good-looking girl had cause to regret her trip in the steamer and her meeting with Lance Loyd. So far he had escaped the consequences of his indiscretion, to call it by no worse name, although the captain had on more than one occasion "carpeted" him, and cautioned him as to his conduct with the female passengers.

Milly Rolt first met him at the Mayor's fancy dress ball, given in the Exhibition building, and the handsome chief officer made himself particularly agreeable to her. To do him justice, he really liked Milly, and deluded himself into thinking if he married

her the past would be buried, and he would live happily with her. Alan Rolt also struck up a friendship with Lance Loyd, which resulted in an invitation to Capella. He never thought for a moment his sister would regard Loyd in any other light than that of a casual acquaintance; but he soon found out his mistake, and was annoyed at her partiality for his society. Whenever the *Karumba* arrived at Brisbane, Lance Loyd managed to obtain a few days' leave to run down to Capella, and Milly always looked forward to his coming.

Alan remonstrated with her, and she resented his words, and they were as near to quarrelling as they had ever been in their lives.

"You know so little about him," said Alan, "and I do not wish my sister to throw herself away; she is far too good for that."

"The only thing you have against him is, that he is merely a chief officer on a boat, and I do not think that a sufficient reason for such strong remarks on your part," said Milly.

Alan reasoned with her, and to very little purpose; but he was determined Lance Loyd should receive no encouragement from him, and the sailor soon perceived that whatever might be Milly's feelings towards him, her brother's were antagonistic. He resented this, and paid Milly more attention in consequence.

Alan made inquiries about him, and found out his character was not without reproach. It was acknowledged he was a clever officer, and deserved

promotion, but his morals were described as decidedly lax.

One or two discreditable tales about his conduct towards the female passengers on the *Karumba* reached Alan's ears, and he felt it was time to interfere. He related all he had heard to Milly, and was much surprised at her defending Lance Loyd vigorously.

"It is not like you to attack him in his absence," she said, "when he has no opportunity of defending himself."

"I am convinced of the truth of what I have heard," he said, "and it is hardly a subject I can question him upon. All I wish is, that you will not show such a decided preference for his society."

"I like him," replied Milly, "and to me he always behaves in a gentlemanly manner."

"He could hardly do otherwise," replied her brother.

"I am sorry you have tried to prejudice me against him; it is the very way to defeat your purpose," said Milly.

Lance Loyd was the cause of the only jarring note between brother and sister, and Alan fervently hoped that in time Milly would see he was unworthy of her.

During Mr. Holt's stay at Capella, Alan noticed with satisfaction that he was much impressed by Milly, and she did not seem at all averse to his attentions. Edwin Holt was a well-to-do squatter, a man of unblemished reputation, an old friend of

Alan's father, and in every respect a suitable match for Milly. The one drawback was, that if he succeeded in winning Essie, and her father married Milly, Alan would stand in a peculiar relation to his sister. He laughed at the idea, but consoled himself with the thought that the difficulty could be got over somehow.

At any rate, Milly would be far happier with such a man as Edwin Holt than with a man of Lance Loyd's type.

It was with feelings of regret on both sides that Edwin Holt and his daughter took their departure from Capella.

"So far the inviting has been all on your side," said Edwin, smiling. "You certainly have the advantage of being nearer civilisation, but if you will undertake the journey, and put up with the inconveniences when you arrive, I am sure we shall be delighted to see you at Glengarry."

"Indeed we shall ; do come," said Essie. "You have no idea what sport we have in our country. I am sure you would not be dull for a day."

"Do not promise too much," said her father, smiling, "or they will be disappointed."

"That I am sure we shall not," said Alan. "What do you say, Milly ? How would you like to explore the wilds of the Gilbert River country under the guidance of Mr. Holt ?"

"And Essie," added Milly slyly. "I think it will be splendid, if we can manage it, and be such a complete change for us."

"We can have some grand gallops together," said Essie eagerly. "Do come, even if it is only to take lessons in training horses from a young lady."

"We must talk it over," said Alan eagerly. "Fortunately, I have an excellent manager I can leave in charge."

"Then there is no excuse for you," said Edwin Holt. "Come up to Glengarry, and we will return with you when we bring the horses to Brisbane to run at Eagle Farm."

"Capital," said Essie. "Dad is a splendid manager. Let us consider it all arranged."

These mutual half promises given, they departed, with lighter hearts on both sides.

Arrived in Brisbane, Edwin Holt quickly settled his business, and they left for Townsville.

Strange to say, the steamer they caught was the *Karumba*, and Essie, being a very pretty girl, soon attracted the attention of Lance Loyd. He made himself very agreeable, and as he was the chief officer, Edwin Holt saw no harm in his talking to his daughter.

Essie hardly knew whether she liked him or not. Of one thing she was certain, he was not to be compared with Alan Rolt. She thought a good deal about Alan during the voyage to Townsville, and it would not have been flattering to Lance Loyd's vanity had he been aware that much of his conversation fell upon deaf ears, Essie's thoughts being far away with Alan and Capella.

When they left the steamer at Townsville. Edwin

Holt shook hands with the captain and Lance Loyd, and in his usual hearty way said if they ever deserted the sea for any length of time, he hoped they would travel as far as Glengarry, just to see what the country was like, and get an idea of how they lived on land.

"I do not think there is much chance of that, Mr. Holt," said the captain. "We never have much time in port ; we are no sooner at the wharf than we have to prepare for the return voyage. Our work is regular, I can tell you ; no chance of much recreation."

"If ever I am lucky enough to be stranded at Townsville, I shall avail myself of your father's invitation," said Lance to Essie, in a low tone.

"I should think it would be very unlucky to be stranded at Townsville, or any other port," replied Essie.

"Not if it gave me the opportunity of seeing you again," he replied quickly.

Essie laughed as she said : "I am not worth being stranded for, all the same."

"Indeed you are," said Lance.

"Nonsense," replied Essie, laughing merrily, as she stepped down the gangway, and waved her hand.

"Nice little girl that," said the captain.

"A regular plum," Lance replied ; and his superior officer turned away in disgust at his remark.

They reached Glengarry safely, and Essie was glad to be in her old home again. She had not realised how much she loved it until she saw it again,

and was surrounded with all her familiar belongings. She was here, there, and everywhere, and drove Barry Green well-nigh frantic with her rush of questions and impatience to see her three equine favourites. Barry had done well during their absence, and the horses looked in excellent condition. Essie could find no fault with them, and he smiled with pleasure at her laudatory remarks.

"I've done my best, Miss Essie, and I am pleased you are satisfied," he said.

A day or two after their arrival Essie sat down to write a long letter to Milly Rolt. It was full of profuse thanks for a pleasant visit, written with girlish enthusiasm, genuine, and unaffected. Alan's name was casually mentioned once or twice, and the portions of her letter in which it appeared took considerably more time to write. She concluded by stating they had a pleasant voyage home, and that Mr. Loyd, the chief officer of the *Karumba*, and the "dear old skipper," made themselves particularly agreeable. "Mr. Loyd is a good-looking man," wrote Essie, "but I am afraid he is a bit of a flirt; not that I know much about it, but he seems to have an eye for the ladies, and is fond of their society. As an unsophisticated young girl I suppose I amused him. Be sure and persuade your brother to bring you to Glengarry, or we shall be awfully disappointed—in fact, inconsolable"

CHAPTER  
THIRTEENTH

*ESSIE RIDES  
JOVIAL*

EDWIN HOLT purchased in Brisbane a carefully selected lot of racing and exercise saddles, and Barry Green and Dick Edgar were delighted with them. Essie had three saddles specially chosen by her father, and which suited her admirably. She found it much easier to ride in them than in the old-fashioned bush saddle she had been accustomed to, and the horses seemed to appreciate the change. She was anxious to find out which was the best of the trio, and arranged for an early gallop to test them. Her father suggested Jovial, Tearaway, and Tattoo ought to be tried at even weights, although their ages differed.

To this Essie agreed, and when the eventful morning arrived she was in a flutter of excitement.

"I shall ride Jovial," she said. "Dick will be on Tearaway and Barry on Tattoo, and I think I shall beat them."

"I am not so sure of it," replied her father. "Tearaway is, to my mind, the best."

"It will be like riding a race," said Essie; "and that must be glorious."

"You will find it exciting, I have no doubt," said her father. "Let me give you some advice. Do

not rush away with the lead at the start. Over a distance of two miles you will have ample time to study the pace, and you can save Jovial for a quick run at the finish."

"I had no idea you knew so much about it," replied Essie, laughing. "I think you know more about racing than you care to confess."

"Perhaps I do," he said, with a smile. "My little girl does not know as much about her father as she imagines."

"Don't be too sure of that," she replied. "I know one thing, a very important matter too; guess what it is?"

"Your puzzles are too hard to find out," he replied. "I will give it up."

"When we were at Capella I discovered my dad was very fond of the society of a certain young lady. You need not deny it; I quite approve of her."

"Oh, you do," said Edwin Holt, with a laugh. "Let me tell you you are a trifle too sharp, miss, and apt to make mistakes or jump at wrong conclusions."

"Not in this case," she replied. "You cannot deny you admire Milly Rolt."

"I do not wish to deny it; I think her a very nice woman indeed, and I know you are equally partial to her brother Alan," he replied.

"He is an entertaining young man," said Essie.

"So I perceived," he answered, smiling.

"I hope they will pay us a visit," said Essie.

"So do I. They will brighten up the old place a bit if they come," said her father.

"It is cheerful enough for me now," answered Essie, "and I am sure they will find it so."

"Perhaps you will hear from Milly Rolt before long," he said.

"She will answer my letter, and then we shall know what they intend doing."

On the morning of the trial Essie was astir soon after five o'clock, and when she went round to the stables, ready dressed for her ride, she found her father waiting for her.

The horses were saddled and being led about until they were ready to start.

It was a delightful morning. The sun had not attained his full power, and there was a cool breeze blowing from the direction of the Gilbert River.

The horses looked well, and their coats shone with health and the results of a good "strapping." The two bays were in far different condition now to the state they were in on their first arrival at the home-stand. The son of The Monk had quietened down, but at times he showed a disposition to have matters his own way. He was full of life this morning and walked jauntily about, snapping playfully at his companions from time to time as he passed them.

"Did you send over to Dr. Mashin to let him know about the trial?" said Essie.

"Yes ; and he said he would be here at half-past five," replied her father.

"Then he will not be long. It is a good fifteen miles from Cumberland, but he will easily do that in a little over the hour ; he always rides good horses. Pickles is a good horse, is he not, Barry ?" laughed Essie.

Barry said something which sounded uncommonly like "Damn Pickles," and walked away.

"Here is the doctor," said her father, as a rider appeared in the distance, "and he is coming along at a good rate."

Dr. Gavin did not let the grass grow under his horse's feet when he travelled. Twelve miles an hour was his usual rate, but he had ridden faster this morning, and his horse was glad to pull up when he arrived.

He greeted them with a cheery "good morning," and said, as he handed over his horse to one of the boys :

"Not bad travelling that, only just over the hour."

"I pity your horse," said Edwin.

"It's wasted on him ; he's used to it. The beggar would rather go that pace and have done with it than loiter about on the road," replied the doctor.

"There is not much chance of loitering when you are in the saddle," said Essie, laughing. "No slow and sure about you, doctor."

"I am not slow, but I am sure. Ask my patients," he replied.

"I'll not risk it," said Essie.

Dr. Gavin laughed heartily as he replied :

"I am afraid you have not much faith in me,

Essie; but I can assure you my patients are always glad to see me, and appreciate everything I do, with one exception."

"And that is?" asked Edwin.

"The sending in of my bills," laughed the doctor, who then turned his attention to the horses, and after a minute inspection said:

"They are a very neat lot, and their condition does you credit, Essie. I think I shall engage you to train the next decent animal I have; I confess I am a poor hand at it myself."

"You are," muttered Barry, "if Pickles is a sample of your skill."

"Which do you like best?" asked Essie.

He hesitated for a few minutes, and then said: "This one."

"There!" said Essie, turning to her father. "The doctor's opinion is the same as mine. That is Jovial, by The Monk—Grey Darling; and I am going to ride him this morning."

"You!" exclaimed Dr. Gavin. "By Jove! Essie, you are a plucky little girl."

"I am not a little girl, sir; I am a young lady."

"I beg your pardon," he replied, with a smile, and raising his hat with a flourish. "I suppose this change in your estate is due to your recent visit to Brisbane, and the baneful influences of city life."

"I am afraid so," said Essie. "I learnt a good many things down south."

"Ah!" said the doctor. "A slight affection of the heart, eh, Essie? No chance for me, I suppose, now."

"Not the least," she replied merrily. "You shall assist at the ceremony—that is, if you have not died of old age in the meantime."

"We are wasting time," said her father. "What is the use of getting up early to avoid the heat, if we do not take advantage of this cool breeze?"

"Quite right," replied Dr. Gavin. "We can talk when the trial is over."

Essie walked across to Jovial, and Dr. Gavin thought how neat she looked in her well-fitting breeches and boots, and what a splendid figure she was.

"There's not another girl to compare with her in Queensland," said Dr. Gavin enthusiastically. "I expect she made some conquests in Brisbane."

"One, I think," laughed her father. "And a nice young fellow he is. We are expecting him here before long. His name is Alan Rolt."

"What! the son of 'Capella' Rolt?" said the doctor.

"The same. Do you know him?"

"No, but I knew his father. A very good family, I assure you," said Dr. Gavin.

"I agree with you; and he is a very nice young fellow."

"How well she sits her horse," said the doctor. "A perfect figure. I'll bet she can give any girl her age a long start when it comes to riding."

"I never saw anyone to equal her," said Edwin proudly. "Do you think I am doing wrong in allowing her to ride like that."

"No, on the contrary. It is the proper way to ride—much safer, more picturesque, more pleasant; in fact, there is no comparison with the side saddle, it is out of the question."

"I am glad to hear such a candid opinion," said Edwin. "I wish you could persuade Miss Barker to your way of thinking; she is shocked at it."

"I'll try," replied the doctor, who was never loathe to have a *tête-à-tête* with Lydia when he came to Glengarry.

"There they go," said Edwin Holt.

"How far is the gallop to be?" asked the doctor.

"Two miles."

"And the weights?"

"Level. Essie has a lot of leads to carry."

Barry was rather disappointed at being told off to ride Tattoo; he would have preferred Tearaway. He was determined to beat Dick Edgar, and, if possible, Essie.

"It will take the conceit out of them a bit," said Barry to himself.

Tattoo was possessed of a good turn of speed, and Barry saved him in the earlier part of the spin. Dick shouted for him to go on and give Jovial a lead, but he took no notice.

"It will never do to let Miss Essie make the running," thought Dick, who wanted Jovial to win, but was, all the same, anxious to find out how good Tearaway was.

He sent his mount to the front and passed Jovial. Essie kept him well in hand, and galloped steadily after the leader, while Tattoo was close behind.

Tearaway soon held a commanding lead, and Edwin Holt said :

"I think I am right ; Dick's mount will turn out the best."

"He is certainly going well, but Essie rides splendidly," said the doctor. "She sits her horse like an old hand ; look how she crouches and eases him. She is a better jockey than half the lads I have seen ride."

Essie's whole being thrilled at the exhilarating motion of her mount, as Jovial dashed along in gallant style. She felt something of the sensation of riding a race, and it was new to her. There was nothing to equal it, she thought, and she determined to win the trial, and there was no time to lose. She judged the distance from the finishing post accurately, and gave Jovial a cut or two with her whip. He answered her call without flinching, and raced up alongside Tearaway. Barry was not slow to follow her example, and Tattoo quickly joined them ; the three were racing almost neck and neck, and Edwin Holt and the doctor were growing excited as to the result.

"Essie'll do it !" exclaimed Dr. Gavin. "She's a champion ! How well she rides ! I am sure she deserves to win."

Edwin Holt watched the struggle, and felt

proud of Essie's skill. Dick Edgar and Barry were good riders, and it was no small feat for a girl to beat them. Jovial was by no means an easy horse to ride, and he marvelled at Essie's strength in holding him together so well. Barry did all he knew to keep Tattoo going, but the pace was too strong for him, and he gradually lost ground.

In his excitement Dick Edgar forgot all about Essie. He wanted to win the trial on Tearaway. He strained every nerve as they neared the finish, but could not shake off Jovial.

Essie's face was white and drawn; she commenced to feel the severe and unaccustomed strain. This was different to an ordinary gallop; it required more strength and endurance. She did not flinch, but stuck to her task, and Jovial gradually pushed his head in front of Tearaway.

"Bravo!" shouted Dr. Gavin, "I knew she would win. It's splendid. What a girl she is! You must be proud of her, Ted."

"I am," replied Edwin Holt; and it was all he could say at the moment.

Jovial beat Tearaway by a couple of lengths, and as Essie pulled him up her arms relaxed after the strain, and she swayed in the saddle.

She made an effort to recover her balance, but would have fallen had not Dick Edgar brought Tearaway quickly alongside. Leaning over he put his arm round her, and supported

her until Dr. Gavin caught Jovial by the bridle, and Edwin Holt lifted her gently out of the saddle.

“How stupid of me,” said Essie, in a low voice. “I am all right now, dad.”

CHAPTER  
FOURTEENTH

*DIGARY DODD'S  
COACH*

ESSIE quickly recovered from the feeling of faintness which came over her, and rapidly described her sensations during the gallop.

"I never felt anything like it before," she said. "I can quite understand the fascination of race riding."

"You did remarkably well," said her father; "but you must not task your strength too much."

"Her faintness was due more to the strain on her nerves than her body," said Dr. Gavin. "I do not think the exercise will harm her."

"I am sure it will not," replied Essie eagerly. "I shall not be nervous next time. I am glad I beat you both," she said to Dick and Barry.

"Tattoo had no chance with Jovial," answered Barry; "but I think Tearaway ought to have run a closer race."

"I am sure Dick did him every justice," said Edwin Holt. "What is your opinion, doctor?"

"I agree with you," replied Dr. Gavin, who had not quite forgiven Barry his exhibition on Pickles, and still thought the horse's ignominious performance was in a great measure due to bad handling.

"We must take the three to Brisbane," said Edwin. "Tattoo may come in handy for a selling

race, and I feel confident Jovial and Tearaway will hold their own with the horses trained at Eagle Farm. It will be a regular triumph for us if we win a good race."

"Which you are pretty nearly sure to do, I should say, after the gallop I have just seen," said the doctor.

At breakfast Lydia Barker was chaffed by the doctor because she had not come out to see the gallop.

"I do not approve of Essie riding as she does," was her remark.

"But it does her no harm; on the contrary, it is good for her," replied Dr. Gavin.

"I see you are all against me, so I must give in," said Lydia, smiling. "Three to one is rather too much for me to manage."

The mail coach passed Glengarry three times a week, and Digary Dodd, the driver, generally halted there to partake of Edwin Holt's hospitality. In the course of the day he arrived with the letters and newspapers, and Essie eagerly opened one with the Brisbane post-mark on.

She scanned the contents quickly, and exclaimed delightedly :

"They are coming in the *Cintra* to Townsville, and she leaves on Monday, so they must be on their way now, according to the date of the letter. I am glad. It will be jolly to have them here. You must help us to entertain them, doctor."

"I will do my best," he said.

Edwin Holt was well pleased at the news, and Lydia noticed how his face brightened when Essie spoke of their coming.

"How shall we astonish them?" he asked, smiling.

"We must have a kangaroo hunt, and explore the blacks' country," said Essie.

"They will probably decline the latter part of your suggestion with thanks," said her father.

"Indeed they will not. A raid into the blacks' territory will be exciting," said Essie.

"And dangerous," was Lydia's remark.

Essie shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say they would not mind.

"It will hardly be necessary to meet them at Townsville," said Edwin. "I will arrange at once with Dodd to keep the best places for them on the coach. It would have been better perhaps for them to have gone right through to Normanton."

"Townsville is the pleasanter route, although a more roundabout way," said Dr. Gavin.

"I cannot bear Normanton," said Essie. "It is always so terribly hot there."

Digary Dodd, like most of the coach drivers, was a curious mixture of humanity. It was difficult to get on with him, unless the passenger happened to know his peculiarities. His mode of speech was unusual, and full of strange and dreadful words, which he ostensibly addressed to his horses, but the passengers had very little doubt were directed at themselves.

Digary's chief delight was to have a "new chum"

on his coach ; if he was a young parson, just out, in search of fields in which to labour, so much the better.

A story is extant of Digary and a youthful clerical which is worth mentioning.

The new arrival was going to Cumberland, and his ideas of the flock he was to labour amongst were exceedingly vague. He was a man full of confidence in his abilities to train people in the way they should go, and as is so often the case, he was totally unsuited for the class of men he had to dwell amongst.

Digary Dodd's language was a revelation to him. He was too horrified to speak for some time, but at last he felt it to be his bounden duty to administer a severe rebuke to the hardened old reprobate.

"My good fellow—" he commenced, as he touched Dodd on the shoulder.

"Are you alluding to me?" asked Dodd, turning sharply round.

"Yes, certainly. My good man—" he commenced again.

"Now look here, mister parson," said Dodd, "let me give you a word of advice. Don't you 'good fellow' or 'good man' anyone in this country, or you'll mighty soon find out they'll make it unpleasant for you. For less than that I have emptied a coach full of passengers into a water hole."

"But your language is awful; I never heard anything to equal it."

"Is that so?" said Dodd, delighted. "I'm generally reckoned a bit forcible in my powers of speech, and when a man like yourself—a man of such wide experience—tells me he's never heard anything like it before, he does me proud, so he does. I guess you have heard a good flow of strong language in your time."

"This is abominable," said the astonished curate.

"I agree with you, bad language is abominable; but language with force in it is quite a different thing. Now, I never swear, damn me if I do," said Dodd.

"You are—" expostulated the curate, when Digary Dodd cut him short by saying:

"Don't spoil what you have said; it's too good to spoil. You and I are of the same way of thinking; now don't let us make a break in it."

The curate became very red in the face. "I protest—" he said.

"Not a bit of it," interrupted Digary. "There's no need to apologise. I'll accept your protest—take it as said. You mean well, I am sure."

The young curate wondered if all the people in Cumberland township were like this coach driver; if so, he felt it would be prudent to beat a retreat. He ventured to ask:

"Are there many people like you, of your stamp, in Cumberland?"

"Lor' bless you, no," said Digary. "I'm a mild-mannered man compared with them. Why, the blacks keep away from the place because the

language they use is so hot. They do say," went on Digary mysteriously, "as how Bill Dent, the store-keeper, died from suffocation, because he swore such a strong oath that it stuck in his throat and choked him. I don't know how true it is, but it's a fact they found a lot of dictionaries in his place after his death, and from the marks in the book he seemed to have been piecing a lot of words together, just as though he wished to swear different to other people. They are a bad lot in Cumberland."

"You alluded to blacks," said the curate. "Are they civilised, or living in ignorance?"

"For the most part they live in the bush," said Digary. "I think they must be fairly well civilised, though."

"What reason have you for thinking they are?"

"Well, they're uncommon fond of white men."

"Indeed; I am glad to hear it."

"Yes; they prefer white flesh to black," said Digary.

The curate turned pale. "Surely I misunderstand your meaning," he said.

"Well, it's like this. They consider a white man makes a good Sunday dinner, but an ordinary black is more of a week-day dish."

"What a horrible place!" exclaimed the curate.

"There's plenty worse. You'll get used to it," said Digary.

"Never!" was the reply. "I ought not to have been sent to such a place."

"Perhaps not," replied Digary; "but there's one thing in your favour,"

"What is that?" asked the young man eagerly.

"You are too thin to eat," said Digary, with a chuckle.

It was the same Digary Dodd that was consuming with remarkable rapidity the good things placed before him at Glengarry by the Chinaman cook.

Johnnie and Digary Dodd got on very well together. As a rule, Digary hated Chinamen, and considered them more venomous than snakes. The Glengarry cook, however, was an exception to his rule. It was amusing to hear their conversation.

"You dirty, yellow-skinned heathen, what is this you have given me?" said Digary, as he turned over some curried meat.

Johnnie grinned. "Dig Dod funny man!" he said.

"Don't you call me names."

"Welly well, Dig Dod! Johnnie no call you Dig Dod."

"Get out of this, you son of a mandarin!" yelled Digary.

"You no likee my curry?"

"What is it, you shrivelled-up mummy?"

"Curry welly good. Jumpy-jumpy, kangaroo tail. Waggy, waggy," grinned Johnnie. "Make Dig Dod jumpy too."

Digary seized a loaf of bread and hurled it at his tormentor.

"Dig Dod welly bad hit miss. Shy 'um crooked," said the Chinaman, laughing.

Dodd rose from his seat, at which signal, proclaiming an assault and battery, Johnnie fled into other regions.

The coach driver sat down again, and commenced the curry.

"The beggar can cook," he thought, as the savoury meat pleased his palate.

"Welly good, Dig Dod," said the Chinaman, poking his head in at the door.

"Get out; clear away!" roared Dodd, sputtering with his mouth full.

"Johnnie likee opium."

"You shall have a ton if you leave me in peace."

The Chinaman took the hint and retired. Later on he lay on his back under the verandah, lost in pleasant dreams of the flowery land, fancying he was floating down the Canton River on a lotus leaf to the paradise where all good Chinamen go.

Digary Dodd finished his meal and went round to his coach. There were no passengers; but he would not have considered them in the least had every place been filled. Dodd was the man to be considered on this coach, and regular travellers understood this, and knew there was no breaking away from the hard-and-fast rule.

"Dodd, I want you to do me a favour," said Edwin Holt.

"Consider it done," was the reply.

"I have two friends, a lady and gentleman, coming to Glengarry by your coach as soon as they can catch it after leaving the *Cintra*."

"I'll not forget. They shall have the best seats."

"Thanks, and I will not forget you," said Edwin.

"Nor will I, Digary," said Essie.

The mail driver's face brightened when he saw her, and he said :

"It is always a pleasure to oblige you and your father, Miss Essie. How's the horses ? "

"First rate. We have had a trial, and I won on Jovial."

"Then he carries my bit the first time he runs," said Dodd. "What's it to be in ? "

"Probably the Brisbane Cup," said Essie.

"You don't say ! That's a rather tall order."

"Not for Jovial."

"I hope not. Anyway, I shall have a dash on him, win or lose."

Digary Dodd clambered up to his seat, shook the reins, cracked the whip, and with a cheery good-bye resumed his journey.

CHAPTER  
FIFTEENTH

*EDWIN HOLT'S  
GUESTS*

"CURIOUS fellow Digary," said the doctor, as they watched the coach disappear in the distance. "He must have been driving for many years."

"Ever since I can remember," replied Edwin Holt. "His heart is in the right place, but he certainly requires a good deal of understanding."

"He will look after our visitors well, I am sure," said Essie, "and they will have a much pleasanter trip than some of his passengers."

Before leaving Glengarry, Dr. Gavin had a quiet chat with Lydia.

Ever since he met her in the hospital he had admired her, but he was doubtful whether she was favourably inclined towards him. Doctor Gavin Mashin was a good-looking man, on the shady side of thirty, and he had an extensive but widely scattered practice. He was exceedingly popular, and did many good deeds by stealth. His bachelor life, however, was dull, and he was seldom at home, generally visiting some friend, and leaving word where he was to be found.

Lydia Barker admired him, but her affection for Edwin Holt stood between the doctor and his desire to make her his wife. He knew nothing of her

feelings towards Edwin, and hoped in time she would regard his suit with favour. He had proposed to her before she came to Glengarry, but she declined him, giving as her reason, which was true then, that she did not intend to marry for some time to come. It was not until she came to Glengarry she changed her mind, and had Edwin Holt asked her to be his wife she would have accepted him. This, in time, he would probably have done had he not seen Milly Rolt.

Dr. Gavin did not despair of eventually succeeding in his desire, and when an opportunity occurred during his visits to Glengarry he generally hinted at the subject.

Lydia took it all in good part, for she really liked him, and knew he was a clever man, and would make her a good husband; their tastes were also congenial.

After a general conversation, he said :

"Are you still obdurate, Lydia? Is there no chance for me? I am waiting very patiently in the hope of being rewarded some day."

"Do not delude yourself with false hopes," she said.

"Are they false?"

"So far as I know, yes."

"You may change your mind," he said.

"I think not."

"You are not offended at me renewing the subject?"

"Oh, no."

"That is a favourable sign, at any rate," he said cheerfully.

Lydia smiled as she replied: "Does it really console you to think so?"

"Indeed it does."

"I wish you would persuade Essie to give up this foolish idea of training and riding horses," said Lydia, changing the subject.

"I see no objections to it," he said.

"It is not a fit occupation for her."

"It is an exceedingly healthy one," he replied.

"Will you do it as a favour for me?" she asked.

"Try and persuade Essie to give it up?"

"Yes."

"It would be useless."

"Still, you can try."

"I really do not see the necessity for it," he answered.

"Not even to oblige me?"

"That is not quite fair. You know I would do anything to oblige you; but really I do not think in this case you regard the matter in its proper light. Her father sanctions it, and I have no right to interfere," he said.

"I do not ask you to interfere, but merely to use your influence with her. I am quite sure she would listen to all you had to say."

"And in the end have her own way," he replied, laughing.

"I am afraid she will meet with an accident, she is so venturesome," said Lydia.

"Your anxiety for her does you credit, but I assure you there is no danger; she is far too skilful to come to any harm."

Lydia saw it would be useless to press the matter further, and she rather admired him for not giving way to her. Still, it was not advisable to let him see this.

"I think it is unkind of you not to do as I ask," she said.

He protested, but still declined, and soon after she left him to attend to her household duties.

Dr. Gavin was angry with her. She had no right to place him in such an awkward position. He did not wish to refuse her request, and yet he felt bound to do so. He had no doubt whatever that Essie's occupation was beneficial to her rather than otherwise. He left Glengarry somewhat depressed in spirits, after promising to come over when the Rolts arrived.

At last Digary Dodd declared they would be here by the next coach.

"I'll bring them, for certain, even if I have to wait for them," he said.

"And delay the mails," said Edwin, smiling.

"Mails! I never trouble about the mails," said Digary, in tones of contempt. "They can always wait my time."

Edwin Holt knew his indifference was assumed, for there was no more punctual man on the road than Digary, and he had never been known to lose a mail bag during all the years he had driven the coach. On one or two occasions he had been in a tight fix,

owing to flood and bush fires, but he had invariably pulled through after a plucky fight.

True to his promise, he brought Alan Rolt and his sister the next journey, and their welcome to Glengarry, it need hardly be said, was of the heartiest description.

"It is a long journey," said Alan, "but it is well worth undertaking to see you again," he whispered to Essie, who laughed merrily as she replied :

"I am glad you think so. I begin to think I am of some importance in the world after all."

Alan and Milly went inside to get rid of some of the dust that had accumulated during the drive.

When they were out of earshot Digary Dodd said to Edwin Holt :

"He's a fine young gentleman, and his sister is a perfect lady. I don't often get a couple of passengers like them. If I did my journeys would be a good deal pleasanter."

"And more profitable," thought Edwin.

Alan was delighted with Glengarry ; he would have been contented anywhere with Essie near him, but he liked the place for itself. As for Milly, she soon made herself at home, and eagerly entered into Essie's plan of campaign for racing. Once or twice she thought of her remark in her letter about Lance Loyd, but when she looked at the girl's bright, innocent face she knew he had not received much encouragement in that quarter. She resented the attention he had paid her, however, and meant to be cooler towards him when they next met. If he

would flirt with a mere girl like Essie, she had sense enough to know that the stories circulated about him had some foundation. She did not mean to let any such thoughts overshadow her visit, and when in the humour there were few more attractive or agreeable women than Milly Rolt.

"You will give me a mount, Essie, some morning," she said. "I have brought my riding costume."

"Of course I will," said Essie. "We will have a race. You shall have your pick of the three horses, but I advise you to take Jovial. I won a trial on him the other morning."

"What is it like riding a race-horse?" asked Milly.

"Like nothing else in the world. It is the height of bliss," said Essie, laughing. "Come and see the horses, if you are not too tired."

"I am quite refreshed now," said Milly; and they went out of the house to the stables.

"What an oddity that coach driver is," said Milly.

"Is he not! but Digary is a very good fellow."

"He has a fund of amusing stories about his passengers."

"Did he tell you about the young curate he brought to Cumberland?" asked Essie.

"He did," replied Milly, laughing; "and he told it in such a droll way that both Alan and myself were convulsed."

"He is full of humour," said Essie. "Dad is a great favourite with him."

"No doubt; I expect he is with most people."

"I am sure he is," said Essie, "and æreserves to be."

Milly admired the horses, and thought Tearaway the best-looking.

"I think I will ride him, if it is not too risky," she said.

"He is quieter than Jovial," replied Essie, "and I do not think there will be any risk."

Alan and his host came up as they stood looking at the horses, and the former said :

"I hear you rode the winner in a trial a short time back."

"Yes, I did," replied Essie, "and there he is. That's Jovial."

Alan glanced at the smart, well-made bay, and said :

"I had no idea you bred such good-looking horses in the bush. He is a beauty ; quite up to the Brisbane standard, I think."

"I am glad you like him ; he is my favourite," said Essie. "I want to see him win the Brisbane Cup."

"I hope your wish will be gratified," said Alan. "If looks go for anything, he is very likely to do it."

"Essie and I are going to ride a race," said Milly. "She will have Jovial, and I will mount Tearaway."

"That's just like Essie," said her father. "I advise you not to run any risks, Miss Rolt."

"She rides well," said Alan.

"I have no doubt about that," replied Edwin; "but Tearaway will be new to her, and he is not exactly lamb-like in his behaviour."

"Essie says he is quieter than Jovial," said Milly.

"Then Jovial must be a terror," laughed Alan.

"He is," replied Edwin; "but Essie and he are good friends. They had many a stiff fight before she conquered him."

"And when does the match take place?" asked Alan.

"As soon as Milly feels fit for it," replied Essie. "She had better have a rest for a day or two after her journey."

"I think we ought to send word to the doctor," said Edwin.

"You will like Dr. Mashin," said Essie. "He is a real good sportsman, and he saw me ride Jovial the other day."

"By all means send for him," said Alan. "I should like to meet him."

It was a splendid evening for the Rolts' first night at Glengarry, and after dinner they all sat on the wide verandah, enjoying the cool night breeze.

"We are fortunate in having a very good climate here," said Edwin. "The heat is intense at times, but for all that it is healthy. Our rainy season, when we have one, is from December to March, but I am sorry to say we are sadly neglected by the water spirits sometimes."

"Is that water in the distance?" asked Milly.

"Yes; you can just see a glimmer of the Gilbert

River," said Edwin. "We must have a ride in that direction ; it is not at all an uninteresting country."

"We had some capital fun when we rounded up the last mob of horses," said Essie. "That was the time we got Tearaway. He bolted through the ring, and Dick Edgar followed him. He nearly came to grief amongst the blacks."

"I should think driving a mob of horses must be exciting," said Milly.

"It is, indeed," replied Edwin Holt, "and sometimes dangerous."

"Are there many blacks about this country?" asked Alan.

"Several tribes," replied Edwin ; "but, as a rule, they keep quiet. Some of them are warlike, but we do not see much of them here."

"I should like to see a big blacks' camp," said Milly. "I have seen them in small numbers, but never a large tribe together."

"Essie proposed we should have an excursion into the blacks' country while you are here," said Edwin Holt. "How would you like it?"

"Immensely," replied Milly. "I suppose they are not dangerous?"

"I think I can manage to arrange our excursion without any danger attending it," said Edwin. "I know King Charlie, the head of a powerful tribe of Gilbert River blacks, and he has always been friendly. He rules over a large area of wild, desolate country, and his influence is great. He is a big, powerful fellow. I fancy he chased Dick Edgar when he was

separated from us, but he would not have harmed him had he known he came from Glengarry."

"They are a treacherous lot at the best of times," said Alan.

"I agree with you; but at the same time I have always found Charlie trustworthy where human lives are concerned, although I confess he is not particular about killing a few sheep when short of meat," replied Edwin Holt, smiling. "I think we may venture into his country without any danger."

CHAPTER  
SIXTEENTH

*TATTOO CAUSES  
A SURPRISE*

WHEN Milly felt equal to riding Tearaway, she and Essie prepared for their match. Dr. Gavin came over to Glengarry, and it was a pleasure for him to meet the Rolts, whose father he had known before he left Brisbane for the north.

Jovial and Tearaway were on their best behaviour when Essie and Milly mounted them, eager for their gallop.

"I think I am going to beat you," said Essie. "Jovial is better than Tearaway; you ought to have selected him."

"I am satisfied with my mount," replied Milly, "and we shall see who will win."

Dick Edgar rode Tattoo, in order to give them a lead for the first part of the journey. The three horses were nearly wound up to racing trim, and Edwin thought this gallop would do them all good.

"Essie looks uncommonly well on horseback," said Alan.

"And so does your sister," replied Edwin. "There is not much to choose between them."

"Milly has a trifle the worst of it," said Alan. "She has never ridden a racer before, but I have no doubt she will come out of the ordeal well."

It was a pretty and uncommon sight to see the two girls on horseback, riding with all the skill and freedom of jockeys, and looking even more graceful. They were good figures, and their close-fitting riding costumes became them admirably.

When they arrived at the starting post, Essie said :

"Now then, Milly, you must do your best. Edgar will give us a lead on Tattoo, and I advise you to make the most of Tearaway ; he is very well, and will give you a good ride. Are you ready to start ?"

"Quite," replied Milly, who was delighted with the novelty of the thing.

"Away you go, Dick!" called out Essie ; and Edgar let Tattoo have his head, and went off at a good pace. "Come along," she said to Milly, and they started after him.

Tearaway went away with a jump that would have unseated Milly had she not been a practised rider. As she felt the horse bounding under her, and the air whistling past her, she pressed her knees firmly in and took a good grip on the reins. Keeping Tattoo in view, she followed in his track, Essie coming close after her on Jovial.

"One would hardly imagine they were girls to look at them now," said Alan. "They ride splendidly."

"A bonnie pair," replied the doctor, "and a credit to the colony."

"I expect the Brisbaneites would be astonished to see them thus attired," said Edwin Holt, laughing.

"I can imagine the staring as they rode down Queen Street ; probably the police would interfere."

"The guardians of the peace would be too enchanted to attempt it," replied Dr. Gavin.

Dick glanced back and saw Tearaway close after him. He hoped Essie would win again, for the credit of Glengarry. Tattoo galloped in rare style, and Dick fancied he possessed a chance.

"It would be a lark to win on the old fellow," he thought. "I wonder what Barry would say."

At the end of the first mile Tattoo still led, but was not so far in front.

"He is going better with Dick on his back than with Barry," said the doctor.

"But he has not much chance of winning," replied Edwin Holt.

"He must be a very useful old horse," was Alan's comment.

Essie thought it high time to send Jovial along, and she endeavoured to race up to Tearaway. This was not so easy as she imagined, for Milly kept her mount going at an even pace, and the horse strode along without any apparent exertion. Essie wondered if Jovial was a trifle off colour ; he did not put quite so much heart into his work as usual. She was surprised at the bold show made by Tattoo, and expected to see him drop back at every stride ; but he held on wonderfully.

"If old Tattoo wins," she said to herself, "we ought to be able to pull off a few races in Brisbane."

The group at the winning post eagerly watched

the gallop, and Alan fixed his eyes on Essie, and thought what a splendid girl she was.

Dick Edgar still kept Tattoo going, and as they were only a couple of furlongs from "home," he thought he could win.

Barry Green watched Tattoo's performance with mingled feelings of amazement and disgust. When he rode the horse in the gallop with Tearaway and Jovial, he thought it useless attempting to beat them, and consequently had not exerted himself. It ruffled his feelings to think Dick Edgar might possibly win; and if he did, the doctor would be sure to chaff him.

"I didn't think the old beggar had it in him," muttered Barry, "or I would have ridden him very differently. He's a deceiving old brute, that's what he is."

Essie felt Jovial falter in his stride, and called out to Milly:

"Go on and beat Tattoo; I'm done for."

Milly heard her, and did all she knew to follow the advice, but it was her first real race, and she hardly knew how to act. Tearaway felt an increased pressure on his sides, and responded to the hint. His run, however, was too late, and Tearaway failed to reach Tattoo as he went first past the group. Jovial was a long way behind, Essie having eased him when she found he had no chance of winning.

"This is a surprise," said Edwin, as they rode up. "Fancy old Tattoo winning. I can hardly believe it. The form is all wrong, that's a certainty."

"I am not so sure of it," replied Dick. "He won comfortably."

"If he is our best, I am afraid we have very little chance of winning down south," said Edwin. "How did you enjoy your new experience, Miss Rolt?"

"It was delightful. Had anyone told me what pleasurable sensations I was about to experience I would not have believed them," she replied, as she patted Tearaway's neck.

"Jovial did not run up to his form," said Essie. "He moved sluggishly. Do you think he has had too much work, or not sufficient?"

"Too much," growled Barry. "I said you were galloping him off his legs."

"He looks big to me," said Dr. Gavin, "and that is not a sign of overwork. Dick got a lot more out of Tattoo than you did."

"If I had known he was such a good one I would have ridden him differently," grumbled Barry. "He is a deceiving old customer."

"Evidently," replied the doctor, with a smile. "He hoodwinked you properly the other day."

"He'll not do it again," snapped Barry.

They dismounted, and as the horses were led away, Alan said to Essie :

"I am sorry you were beaten, but you rode beautifully."

"Did I?" replied Essie. "I didn't feel very beautiful when Jovial pulled up."

"Look at him!" exclaimed Alan. "He walks lame."

"So he does," replied Essie; "that accounts for it. Oh, I do hope it is nothing serious, for I am sure he is the best horse we have."

She pointed to Jovial, and her father said:

"I noticed he limped when you pulled up. I will see what is the matter with him," and he followed the horses to the stables.

Here he made a careful inspection of Jovial, and found his off fore foot cracked, and he went very tender on it. This was bad news, and Essie looked troubled.

"I am afraid it will take him some time to get over it," she said.

"With care he will soon be all right," replied Edwin; "but he will only have to take gentle exercise for some time."

"That will pull him back a lot," said Essie, "and we have to go to Brisbane next month."

"You must fall back on Tattoo," said the doctor.

Essie laughed as she replied:

"He will be a weak champion to depend upon. Dad thinks he may win a selling race."

"He is far too good for that," replied Alan. "If my judgment goes for anything, I rather fancy Tattoo will astonish us all when it comes to racing. If he goes so well in his gallops, he will, I am sure, hold his own in a race. You must have a spin with Red Streak before the races; he is a very safe trial horse."

"It is good of you to offer it," replied Essie. "I do not think Tattoo will have much chance with Red Streak; but Jovial may, if he is well."

"You must have a ride on Red Streak when you come to Capella again," he replied.

"Perhaps he will object to me," laughed Essie.

"I am sure he will not."

The result of the gallop was quite a surprise, and considerably enhanced the reputation of Tattoo, although Essie did not believe him to be as good as the result made out. Her sympathies were with Jovial, her favourite, and she was certain neither Tattoo or Tearaway would have any chance with him when well.

In the evening, by some slight manœuvring, Alan managed to get Essie to himself, and as Edwin Holt, as host, took possession of Milly, Dr. Gavin found himself, much to his satisfaction, paired off with Lydia.

Essie and Alan strolled about the orchard attached to the homestead. It was a prolific orchard, and all kinds of fruit, especially tropical, seemed to thrive there. It was a new sight to Alan to see huge banana trees cultivated to such perfection, and their huge green elephant-ear-shaped leaves were refreshing to look at.

"I had no idea you had such beautiful gardens in this part of the country," he said. "You must have an ample supply of water."

"I am glad to say we have," replied Essie. "Dad has a lot of underground tanks for rain water, and we have a very good well; it possesses the great advantage of always supplying cool water in the hottest weather, and we have never known it to be dry."

"If bush life is always as jolly as this, no wonder you like it," he said.

"I love it," replied Essie, "and I love Glengarry. I don't think I could ever be happy away from Glengarry; I mean, for a very long time."

Alan felt disappointed. He had pictured to himself his house at Capella with Essie permanently installed there. If she was so deeply attached to Glengarry, it would be a formidable obstacle in his way.

"I do not wonder at your being so fond of the place, but you will probably leave it some day," he said.

"Why should I?" she asked, in surprise.

"You may be tempted to leave it with someone you loved very dearly."

"My father," she answered, with a smile. "Oh! he will never leave Glengarry; I have no fear of that."

"How innocent she is," he thought. "The love of her father takes first place in her heart; it may not always be so."

"Surely you would not care to leave Capella?" said Essie.

"No; you are right. I think I feel towards Capella much in the same way as you do about Glengarry."

"I am so glad. I think people who love their homes are so much happier in life; there is always something to look forward to when you are away. Existence without a settled home must be miserable. I know I should be very discontented."

"You are not likely ever to lack a home," he said, "but you may be tempted some day to change it."

"Never, never, never!" she said emphatically. "Under no circumstances can I dream of such a thing."

How lovely she was, quite unconscious of his admiration, and utterly oblivious to his faint suggestions of another kind of life for her; a life in which he wished with all his heart to share a part!

She was young, and there was time for a change to come over her, but he knew, no matter what happened, her father and Glengarry would probably claim the largest share in her affections.

CHAPTER  
SEVENTEENTH

*A GAME OF CARDS—  
AND AFTER*

"So you would really like to see a blacks' camp?" said Edwin Holt to Milly.

"Very much, indeed," she replied. "I have seen blacks near Capella, but they are an utterly degraded lot, hardly human. When they come near a town they get demoralised, and take to drink whenever they can obtain it."

"You will find the Gilbert River blacks very different to the fellows who roam about in and around Brisbane. Most of them are merely wild, untamed savages; but it is surprising the control King Charlie has over his tribe."

"Is he a very formidable fellow, this chief of the tribe?"

"In a way he is, for he has a large number of followers. They seldom molest me, because I do not make a fuss if they kill a few sheep; we have plenty of them, and a dozen or so are not missed," said Edwin.

"I expect you give them more liberty than many of the squatters," she replied.

"I think so. It is foolish to be at enmity with them, for they are sufficiently numerous to cause a good deal of trouble. I am sorry to say, since the

Croydon gold-fields have been opened up, there has been a lot of fighting between the whites and the blacks; naturally, the latter are beaten, and that makes them revengeful. I do not know whether I ought to allow you to run any risk, although there may not be much danger. You are my guest, and I must protect you," he said, smiling.

"You must take me to see them," said Milly.

"Very well! You command, and I will obey."

"How very good of you! I shall feel quite like a general commanding an army when we set out."

"And a splendid leader you will be," he said.

"Do not be too sure of that; I may be rash, and lead you into trouble."

"And give us a chance to do something heroic," he replied.

Edwin Holt sent Barry Green away to parley with Charlie, and arrange for a "coroboree" for the benefit of Milly and Alan.

Barry was known to many of the black tribe over which Charlie held sway, and he had no fear in venturing among them alone. Some years before he had proved to the blacks that he was not to be molested with impunity, and Charlie respected him for the courage he had shown.

Barry was away nearly a week, and Edwin Holt wondered what had become of him, when one morning he rode into the yard, and in answer to questions, explained that Charlie and his tribe had been difficult to find, having left the vicinity of the river, and gone up the country

"What did he say when you came up with him?" asked Edwin Holt.

"In the first place, I rated him soundly for chasing Dick, and trying to spear him. I explained that we had been rounding up a mob of horses, and that he had gone in chase of one that had broken away. I said if his tribe had injured him, you would have driven them out of the country."

"What answer did he give?"

"At first he worked himself into a rage, but gradually calmed down. He said no white man could drive him out of the country, but he was sorry he had tried to spear Dick. He explained that had he known Dick belonged to Glengarry he would not have acted as he did."

"That is probable; and about the visit to the camp and the coroboree?"

"I told him that after what had taken place, and in consideration of the kindness you had always shown his tribe, he ought to make a special effort to please you. I pitched it in strong, and it had the effect I wished."

Edwin Holt laughed. He knew Barry's pitching it in strong would consist of powerful language of which Charlie would probably not understand much, for Barry's vocabulary was extraordinary, and contained many words unknown in modern tongues.

"Charlie promised no end of things, but whether the 'black devil' will carry them out is another matter. He said you should have a war dance, a fire dance, spear and boomerang throwing, races, and a fight with nullah-nullahs."

"That is a good programme to go on with," said Edwin Holt, smiling. "If he carries that out, your efforts will not have been in vain."

"If he fails," said Barry, "only let me get the chance and I'll—"

"Do what?" asked Edwin.

"I don't exactly know, but something he will not like," replied Barry.

Edwin Holt communicated the news to them at lunch time, and Milly was quite excited at the prospect of such a show.

"A fire dance!" said Essie. "That will be a special honour for you, Milly. They seldom give it before strangers."

"There is one thing about it," said Dr. Gavin, "it works them up to a perfect fury, and they are scarcely accountable for their actions."

"Please, doctor, do not try and terrify us," said Essie.

"It would take more than that to frighten you."

"I am very timid, indeed I am. As my medical attendant, you ought to know that."

"As the family doctor, I say, without hesitation, that in no part of Miss Essie Holt's body does timidity exist."

"Please don't charge a heavy fee for that opinion," laughed Essie.

"I will be moderate, but considering the importance of the diagnosis, the fee ought to be proportionately large."

Dr. Gavin was fond of a game of euchre, and at

night he and Milly were partners against Alan and Essie.

It was a merry game, and there was much laughter.

Alan made one or two blunders, and Dr. Gavin said slyly :

“Pay more attention to the game ; keep your eyes on your cards, not on your partner.”

Milly laughed as she said :

“Alan has no eyes for anything else when Essie is present.”

“Don’t be silly,” replied Essie, who, for the first time, was conscious that Alan really paid her marked attention. She was not displeased at the discovery, but it unnerved her a little.

Alan kicked the doctor’s legs under the table by way of retaliation.

In the end Alan and his partner were hopelessly beaten, much to Essie’s disgust, for she played well, and generally won.

“It was your fault,” she said to Alan, when they were alone.

“That we lost all the games ? ”

“Yes ; you played very badly.”

“You were the cause of it,” he replied.

“That is not complimentary,” said Essie, with a toss of her head.

“I mean that I could not concentrate my attention on the game with you sitting opposite to me.”

“I could not sit anywhere else,” replied Essie.

He smiled as he answered :

"You will not understand what I mean."

"I understand what you say."

"May I explain?"

"If it is necessary."

"When you are near me, I can think of no one but you, and when you are absent I long for your presence."

"How absurd," she said.

"You may think it so; to me it is a serious matter."

"You must consult Dr. Gavin; he will give you something for it," said Essie mischievously.

Alan made a gesture of impatience. "It is no trifling matter to me," he said.

"I had no idea it was so serious," replied Essie.

"You are very young—" he commenced.

"And therefore ignorant," chimed in Essie.

"It is too bad of you," he said, in despair. "Cannot you be serious for one moment?"

"I am too young to be serious," she replied.

"Essie, my future happiness depends upon you," he said seriously.

This time she made no flippant answer, and he went on:

"I know you are young, but you are far more sensible than girls many years older. I loved you, Essie, the first time I met you, and I shall always love you. Now do you understand me?"

She raised her eyes to his face, and said innocently:

"I am so glad; I like to be loved. It makes me happy to think people are fond of me."

This was hopeless ; he knew she failed to grasp his meaning. Her artless answer proclaimed her innocence, for there was no sham about Essie. He loved her the more for it ; for the purity and innocence it disclosed. He felt he dare not intrude further at present ; another time she would understand. He had said he loved her, and she accepted his love as something which contributed to her happiness, without understanding its real purport. He would continue loving her, and wait for the revelation that must sooner or later come to her, as it did to every woman.

"Now we understand each other, we can be very good friends indeed," he said.

She looked surprised. "I thought we were friends before to-day."

"Of course," he stammered. "I hardly meant that. We must always be friends, Essie," he said, as he took her hands in his.

She did not withdraw them. He felt a strong temptation to take her in his arms, but he resisted ; such a sudden disclosure as this would frighten her, perhaps drive her away from him.

"I am sure we shall," she answered.

Alan Rolt thought over his conversation with Essie, and when he considered it from every point of view, was on the whole satisfied. There was no one else to supplant him at present ; so far that was satisfactory. He meant to take good care no one secured the advantage he held.

The innocence of a young girl is sacred, and Alan

felt its beneficent influence. He loved her passionately, and felt she could love him as he desired, but he decided it must come of her own free will. He would not force it—that would spoil all.

Alan was a good-looking young man, well-off, and a general favourite in Brisbane social circles. He was not averse to a little flirting with a pretty girl, and had sat out many dances in a cosy corner with some fair companion. He found it pleasant, and discovered no harm in it. But Essie; he knew he could not flirt with her, and pass the time away uttering meaningless platitudes. She was different to the other girls he had met, some of them better-looking than Essie, but without her undefinable charm. Some of these young ladies he would not care for Essie to meet, why he hardly knew, but the fact remained.

As for Essie, she thought over their conversation, and was happy. She had been reared in an atmosphere of love and fatherly affection. Dr. Gavin loved her, he had told her so; and now Alan Rolt said the same. It was nice to be loved, as she had said to Alan. She thought what a happy world it would be if everyone felt as she felt. She was about to tell Lydia what Alan had said, when something checked her, and the words remained unspoken.

Why?

This was the question she asked herself, and found no answer.

Why could she not tell Lydia that Alan said he loved her, as she had told her when Dr. Gavin said it?

What was the difference? Was Alan's love for her unlike Dr. Gavin's?

That could not be; to her there was only one kind of love, as yet.

Her knowledge of love was of a something that brought joy into life, and in which pain found no place.

The love that brings exquisite pain she had yet to learn. She was on the threshold of a new experience; she arrived there when she found her words checked, and Alan's "I love you" remained untold to Lydia Barker.

Essie was puzzled over this. She was more perplexed still when she found it impossible to mention the matter to her father; this troubled her more than she cared to acknowledge. She was angry because it was so, and yet she could not alter it.

From this frame of mind she passed to another.

She actually found pleasure in the thought that Alan's "I love you" was known only to herself.

CHAPTER  
EIGHTEENTH

*THE FIRE  
DANCE*

It was a long stretch to the blacks' camp, and preparations were made for a night in the open. This was a novel experience to Alan and Milly, and they looked forward to it with pleasurable excitement. Edwin Holt decided to pitch the camp close to the river, where there was shade, and generally a cool breeze at night.

The tents were sent on ahead in charge of Barry Green and Dick Edgar, and when the party from Glengarry arrived, they found everything in readiness.

Milly was delighted with the novelty of her surroundings, and expressed her satisfaction in no measured terms. Her host was gratified at the success of his plans, and Dr. Gavin was amused at the anxiety his friend displayed to please her.

"If I am not mistaken, he is either in love with her, or on the verge, and I do not wonder at it. She is a charming young lady."

There was also satisfaction in the thought that if Edwin Holt made love to Milly, there was no probability of his so doing to Lydia.

Many of the hands on these large stations, such as Glengarry, can play various instruments, and Edgar

was a very fair performer on the banjo, which, under Edwin's instructions, he had brought with him.

The camp was enlivened by some stirring tunes, and it was late at night before they turned in, leaving one of their number as guard.

They were on the march again early, and towards evening sighted the blacks' camp. As they drew near, Edwin Holt said :

"There are more of them than usual; Charlie must have mustered in strong force to honour you."

"I am afraid the black king has not even heard my name," laughed Milly.

"I assure you he has, because Barry impressed upon him that a beautiful white lady from Brisbane was going to pay him a visit. He gave strict injunctions to Charlie and his tribe that they were to be on their best behaviour, and from what I gathered, there is to be a grand display in your honour."

"I feel quite flattered," replied Milly, smiling. "I hope the king will deem me worthy of it."

When they were within a mile of the camp, they saw a small body of blacks coming to meet them.

"There's Charlie in front," said Dr. Gavin. "He is a fine big fellow, and not easily mistaken."

They rode forward, and as they approached, the blacks brandished their spears and shouted a harsh welcome, startling Milly, who fancied it must be a war cry. She was reassured, however, by their peaceful attitude, and Edwin Holt said :

"You will see and hear far more startling things later on."

Charlie came forward and spoke to Edwin Holt, who pointed Milly out to him, and the black regarded her admiringly. His black eyes shone, and his white teeth were exposed in glistening rows as he smiled.

Edwin Holt beckoned Milly to come forward, and she rode up to his side.

Charlie regarded her with interest and curiosity, and Milly thought him a fine-looking fellow for a black. Charlie was a stalwart-built man, and his face was not as coarse or repulsive as many of the aborigines of Australia. He had, it was generally thought, some white blood in his veins, although it was difficult to say how, or from whom he inherited it. He was a man of five-and-thirty, or thereabouts; and his strength was proverbial. It was his prowess in the use of native weapons which made his tribe look up to him and fear him. He had been known to shatter the head of a black at a single blow for daring to dispute his authority. Such acts as these increased his power, for fear was stronger than love or affection amongst them.

Edwin Holt thanked him for his promise to provide amusement for them, and Charlie said, in his broken English, that he was always glad to please the owner of Glengarry, who was good to the black men.

Edwin Holt beckoned Dick Edgar, who came up on his horse.

"Do you know him?" asked Edwin Holt.

Charlie grinned as he said: "Yes; but I did not know him then."

"You can throw a spear and a boomerang well," said Dick.

Charlie nodded, and said he seldom missed his aim.

"It was lucky for me you failed to hit the mark the other day," said Dick. "I felt the boomerang whistle round my head, and the spear struck my horse."

"Had you shouted out 'Glengarry' we would have known you," said Charlie, who then asked them to come into the camp.

They rode forward and followed him into the centre of the ground, where a large space was left for the tents.

Milly looked and saw on all sides swarms of blacks, all armed, fierce-looking—a formidable body of men.

They were not likely to inspire confidence in a stranger, but she was contented in the thought that no harm would befall them when Edwin Holt was present. She admired him for the skill he must have displayed in dealing with these men.

The night they arrived Charlie announced there would be a grand coroboree and fire dance.

"You must try some of the native dishes," said Edwin Holt. "I assure you they are often delicate and tasty."

"It would not be wise to ask the nature of their contents, I suppose?" laughed Milly.

"Perhaps not, until after the feast," said Edwin, smiling.

King Charlie had ordered a barbaric banquet in honour of his guests, and the "goris" had been hard at work preparing it.

Milly thought the women were more repulsive than the men, and Essie told her they were decidedly more treacherous and jealous.

The various dishes were tasted by Dr. Gavin and Edwin Holt, who selected those they thought would best suit the palates of Milly and Essie.

Kangaroo-tail soup Milly vowed had never tasted so well before, and they were quite delighted with a dish that resembled chicken, but which they afterwards discovered was composed of strips of flesh of a species of lizard much favoured by the blacks. There were several kinds of fish, caught in the river, and baked in earthen ovens, in dishes with covers. The fruits were numerous, and Edwin Holt smiled when he saw the display.

"I am afraid some Cumberland orchards have been raided for our feast," he said. "Charlie is not at all particular as to the rights of property, especially when eatable. That roast, or rather baked mutton, we had he said came from a Glengarry sheep. The rogue explained that he thought it would suit us better than any other."

They laughed heartily at this, and Essie said :

"Charlie is never backward at confessing to a few minor thefts, in the fond hope that it will shield greater robberies."

They saw the blacks assembling, and a huge fire pile was lighted. The flames shot up to a great height,

leaping and twisting in numerous weird, fantastic shapes. When the heap was stirred, millions of fiery sparks shot in a glittering mass into the air, falling down to the ground in a shower of golden rain. A low rumbling sound, like distant thunder followed, and Milly asked if there was a storm coming.

"It is the blacks beating their wooden drums," replied Edwin Holt. "Listen! It is gradually growing louder; the sound rouses them, and they dance in a wild frenzy when it reaches its height."

Round the fire pile dark figures flitted to and fro and presently a huge circle was formed, and the dance began.

It was an extraordinary sight. The wood glowed red-hot, and shone on the black, glistening, oiled bodies like the reflection of a fire on polished ebony. They were strange, wild figures, naked, except for a loin mat, which covered them to a few inches above the knees.

The black, coarse hair of the chiefs was ornamented with feathers of birds, and their faces were smeared with a reddish substance, increasing the ferocity of their appearance.

"They look like men who have been in a desperate fight, their faces smeared with blood," said Milly.

"It is a strange sight," said Alan.

"Horrible, is it not?" replied Essie.

"Weird and terrifying," he said. "I should not care to fall into their clutches alone."

"They are not so bad as they look," laughed Essie.

"It is to be hoped not," answered Alan.

The coroboree was now at its height. The blacks were dancing in a frenzied way, stamping the hard ground with their feet, until the air resounded with rhythmical beats.

Charlie went forward and urged them on. He was received with a loud yell, and the blacks rushed in upon him, until he seemed in danger of being pushed into the fire. He joined their dance for a time, and then, at a given signal, the fire pile, which was burning low, and glowed with a tremendous heat, was furiously attacked by the blacks with their spears, and scattered in a hundred different directions, until the red-hot embers lay upon the ground in fiery patches. Amidst these burning particles the blacks danced furiously, kicking the scorching wood without suffering any apparent harm.

It was a thrilling sight, and the small group of white spectators completed a startling picture. As the fires burned out, the blacks became quieter, until at last, one by one, they sank down on the ground, and stretched themselves out to rest and sleep.

Charlie came up to receive their congratulations, and was given some whisky and tobacco, of which he was exceedingly fond. Edwin Holt, however, had taken the precaution to dilute the spirit considerably, knowing that Charlie would probably drink it neat, which he immediately did, taking such a long pull that Alan thought he must eventually choke. Having partially satisfied his thirst, Charlie commenced to smoke, and as the

liquor worked upon him, he promised great things for the morrow.

Even amongst the uncivilised blacks of Australia there is rivalry in the camps, and amongst Charlie's tribe there was no exception to the rule. His younger brother, Harry, was jealous of his power, and as he was the favourite of the "gori," his mother, he was encouraged in his wild desire to be the king. He was not so powerful as Charlie, but stronger than the average run of men of the tribe.

He saw Charlie with the white folks, and resented not being asked to join them. He did not, however, mean to be left out, and sauntered up to the group.

Charlie scowled at him, but made no remark. Edwin Holt asked who he was, and the king said in a thick voice, and with a curious laugh :

"He is my little brother."

Harry stepped forward, looking so fierce that they fancied he was about to strike the speaker, and Edwin Holt knew there would be danger to their party if a quarrel took place. He understood the situation, and made haste to propitiate the new-comer by inviting him to drink and smoke.

Harry sat down, drank greedily, and smoked furiously, his small, beady, cat-like eyes fixed on Milly Rolt.

He seldom spoke, and made guttural sounds when questioned, but he did not take his eyes away from her for any length of time.

This persistent staring annoyed Edwin Holt, and

he changed his seat, screening Milly from the black, who scowled at him angrily.

Charlie, who was alert, and had consumed more whisky, saw the move, and why it was made, and turning to his brother, said :

“Go!”

Harry took no notice of the order.

“Go!” said Charlie again, in a threatening tone.

Harry dare not disobey; but he resented. He rose to his feet, and as he did so Edwin Holt handed him a small glass flask, making signs that he could keep it; he also gave him more tobacco.

Harry smiled his thanks, and as he turned away, again looked at Milly Rolt and scowled at King Charlie, as he lay stretched out on the ground, closely regarding him.

“Mischief”—or a word to that effect—muttered Charlie, as his brother walked away.

CHAPTER  
NINETEENTH

*A CRIME  
PREVENTED*

ONLY men who have slept in the midst of a black's camp can understand the peculiar feeling which comes over them during the silent hours of the night. Constant association accustoms them to the curious sounds and the strange influences at work.

Edwin Holt had camped with blacks before, but not when they were in such numbers as lay around them.

Milly and Essie occupied the same tent, and close at hand were Edwin Holt, the doctor, and Alan, while Dick, Barry, and the remainder of the hands were in the open close by.

It was a remarkably still night, the slightest sounds being audible, and the stentorian breathing of the savages alone disturbed the sleepers in the tents.

Essie, tired out, was soon at rest, and Milly went to the door of the tent, and looked out at the strange scene.

There was a faint light from the myriads of stars glittering above, and by it she saw, scattered on the ground, black masses of men in curious attitudes, not at all suggestive of comfortable repose. By the side of the men lay spears and other weapons. How

wonderfully still everything was, and Milly stood fascinated at the unaccustomed scene. Stepping inside the tent, she took a camp seat and went out again. The cool night air refreshed her after the heat of the day. Leaning back against the canvas, she became drowsy, and gradually sank into a slumber.

How long she slept she had no idea, but when she awoke with a start she was at first confused, and hardly realised where she sat. Then, as her eyes rested on the camp, she saw creeping towards her a long, black body, with bright' glistening eyes in the head. She watched its movements, and saw it was one of the tribe. What were his intentions? why did he proceed so snake-like and stealthily? He meant harm to someone, and she kept her eyes upon him. At first she thought he was creeping towards their tent, but he changed his course and wriggled away to the right.

She knew Charlie was sleeping close on the other side of Edwin Holt's tent, for she had seen him lie down there, when overcome with the fumes of liquor and tobacco.

With a start she recognised Charlie's brother, the black who had so fixedly stared at her, and who resented savagely the interference. He meant some harm to the king probably, and in that case their party would be in an awkward position. Milly was courageous in the presence of danger, and she rose quickly, and waited a few moments, still watching him.

Harry evidently had not seen her, or only when she slept. When he disappeared behind the tent, she ran quickly and peered round. She almost screamed in her alarm at what she saw, but by an effort controlled herself.

Harry stood upright, looking down at his prostrate brother. Suddenly he raised his right arm, and in his hand she saw a spear. There was not a moment to be lost; if she hesitated, Charlie would be pinned to the earth. As Harry raised his hand aloft for a desperate thrust, Milly darted rapidly and silently forward, and before the astonished black realised what had happened, she pushed him heavily in the back, and he fell sprawling over Charlie's body, his spear flying out of his hand.

Charlie was in a stupor, and although the stumbling roused him, he merely grunted and turned over, while his brother, after a savage glance at his assailant, ran quickly away, foiled in his treacherous purpose.

The excitement over, Milly felt the reaction, and became faint. She walked hesitatingly to the tent, and as she caught the canvas opening by one hand, Edwin Holt came out. He was a light sleeper, and Harry's fall roused him.

"Good heavens! Milly—Miss Rolt—what are you doing here?" he asked anxiously.

She tried to speak, but failed, and as she swayed forward he caught her in his arms and held her tight, perhaps longer than there was any occasion for.

In this situation Alan and Dr. Gavin, who had

been disturbed by Edwin Holt's movements, found them, and the unexplained situation puzzled them.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Alan, somewhat sharply.

"Your sister has fainted ; she is recovering," said Edwin, still supporting her.

"How came she here?" asked her brother.

"I do not know. I heard something near our tent, and when I looked out I found her on the verge of fainting."

Alan was only half satisfied ; he failed to understand how she came to be there at all. Milly opened her eyes, and Edwin Holt helped her to stand upright.

"What are you doing here?" asked Alan angrily.

She resented his tone, and said : "I will explain in a few minutes."

Dr. Gavin brought a seat for her, and after resting a few minutes, she gave them an account of what had taken place.

They were surprised and astonished, admiring her courage, and Alan inwardly sorry for having, in the heat of the moment, placed a false construction on her conduct.

"You have saved us all from a grave danger," said Edwin Holt, "and I thank you for your courage and presence of mind. There is no doubt Harry meant to kill his brother, and had he done so, some lives might have been lost. For a long time there has been a feud between them, but Charlie holds the tribe in subjection, and none dare dispute his

authority. Dead, however, he would at once be succeeded by his brother."

"Harry is a treacherous scoundrel," said Dr. Gavin. "I saw how he looked at his brother last night when he ordered him to leave us. What is best to be done?"

"Say nothing about it until we leave the camp," said Edwin. "Then we can warn Charlie to be on his guard, and tell him what happened. If we inform him when he awakes, it will cause trouble, and we are better out of the way when that arises."

"You are right," answered the doctor; and Alan saw the force of his remarks, and said:

"Where is Charlie?"

"Close by the tent on the other side," said Milly.

Alan walked round, and found him sitting up, evidently just roused out of his sleep.

The black looked at Alan and grinned, then shook his head, and signified that Edwin Holt's whisky and tobacco had been too potent for him. He got up, and when he saw the group in front of the tent looked surprised, and a trifle suspicious. He asked why they were astir so early, and Edwin Holt explained that his friends wished to see the camp in the night when the tribe rested. This answer satisfied Charlie, who wondered at their curiosity, and thought them silly for wasting a night's rest for such a purpose.

Milly returned to her tent and found Essie still asleep, and in the morning she was very much surprised to hear her friend's story.

"You were brave," she said. "I dare not have done it. I should have screamed and roused the camp, and then there would have been bloodshed. You must have a long rest now; it will do you ever so much good."

Milly followed her advice, and after a sound sleep felt quite refreshed and herself again.

Charlie having recovered from his over-indulgence, organised a number of displays for their amusement.

It was wonderful the skill with which the blacks threw the boomerang. This dangerous, curved weapon, made of very hard wood, ornamented with curious designs, cleverly carved, was whirled into the air, almost out of sight, and then with a graceful flight descended and fell at the thrower's feet. There were many good boomerang throwers, but none to equal Charlie and his brother. The former had half-a-dozen boomerangs brought to him, and sent them quickly one after the other on their aerial flight. They came back in rapid succession, and fell in a heap at his feet.

They were surprised to see Harry appear as though nothing had happened, and he displayed uncommon skill with various weapons. He seemed to have blotted his murderous design out of his head, although he looked wonderingly at Milly from time to time.

"He has a great respect for you after the courage you displayed," said Edwin.

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"In that case, perhaps it might do good if I spoke to him."

"What about?"

"His wicked design of last night," said Milly.

"He will listen, but pay no heed to anything you say."

"Let me try."

"As you wish; I will call him," and Edwin Holt drew Harry's attention, and he came to them.

Milly took him aside, and tried to explain how terribly wicked he was in desiring to kill his brother.

Harry understood something of what she said, but it did not make much impression upon him.

"You will not try and kill him again?" said Milly.

Harry grinned as he stammered out a reply to the effect that Charlie was a bad man, no good, always drunk, and quarrelling with other tribes.

"But you must not kill him; you are his brother," expostulated Milly.

The relationship did not count for much with him; he would as soon spear his brother as any other man, if he stood in his way.

Milly, finding him incorrigible, turned from him in disgust, and went back to the others.

Essie was eager to hear how Milly fared with him, and plied her with questions, all of which were answered, and caused Essie to affirm that "Harry deserved hanging."

The best men of the tribe were all anxious to show their skill, and the sports were continued until late in the day.

Edwin Holt, however, determined not to remain another night in the camp; there was no telling what danger might arise.

Accordingly, he called Charlie into the tent, thanked him for his efforts to please them, and promised him a handsome present when he came to Glengarry.

Charlie replied that he would not be long in coming.

"I have something more to tell you," said Edwin. "Last night this lady saved your life."

Charlie looked puzzled. He did not comprehend how this was done.

Edwin Holt explained; and as he did so, King Charlie's face became distorted with fury, and had his brother been on the spot he would probably have killed him. He ground his teeth in his rage, and vowed vengeance.

"You must promise us not to punish him," said Edwin. "We have explained what occurred to you so that you may keep a sharp look-out, but we do not wish to cause trouble between you."

Charlie nodded. He would keep a look-out. Oh, yes; they need have no fear of that. And it would be a very keen look-out, indeed. He then left them, in order to get together the curios and weapons he had selected for them. These they accepted as a memento of their visit, and when they left the camp the blacks yelled lustily.

King Charlie accompanied them for some distance, and then returned to the camp.

"He will make short work of Harry when he has the chance," said Edwin Holt, "or I am much mistaken."

"Will he kill him?" asked Milly.

"Probably. Unfortunately, in that way lies his safety, and he knows it."

"These blacks have a way of dealing out rough-and-ready justice," said Dr. Gavin; "and, after all, they are not much worse than civilised beings. We cannot deny that Harry deserves his fate, if it overtakes him in that shape."

Edwin Holt's surmise was correct.

Before next morning Harry had disappeared. No one questioned King Charlie about it except his mother. She accused him of murdering Harry, and he then told her the tale of treachery as related to him by Edwin Holt.

She did not believe it, and threatened him with her vengeance, at which he laughed, and this only enraged her the more.

King Charlie scented another possible tragedy, but he did not mean to be the victim.

CHAPTER  
TWENTIETH

*AWAY DOWN  
SOUTH*

AFTER a pleasant stay of several weeks at Glengarry, the time arrived when the Rolts were to leave for Brisbane, and, as previously arranged, Edwin Holt and Essie were to accompany them with the horses. Another trial had taken place between the trio, and this time, much to Essie's delight, Jovial won easily, old Tattoo being last.

"I knew his victory was a sham," said Essie, "and that he did not win on his merits."

Dick, however, was of a different opinion. He rode Tattoo on each occasion, and in the second trial knew the horse had not done his best.

"He never seemed to get going," he said to Essie, who replied that the result would have been the same under any circumstances.

She was thoroughly convinced Jovial was the best horse, and would not alter her opinion.

"I hope your judgment may prove correct," said her father, "but I have my doubts."

The day of their departure arrived. The luggage had been sent on to Townsville, and also the horses in charge of Dick, Barry, and a handy lad. They arrived safely at Townsville, where they waited for the party from Glengarry.

Digary Dodd was proud of his passengers as the coach drove away from the homestead. He felt that, in some way, he was connected with this racing invasion, and fondly hoped one, at least, of the Glengarry horses would win.

Essie occupied the box seat, with Alan close behind her. Dr. Gavin and Lydia were at the back of the coach.

Digary kept his team going at a sound pace. His long whip curled and cracked over the horses' ears, but he seldom touched them with the lash. It was a very bad horse indeed he found it necessary to flog. Dodd's teams were recognised as the best on the road, and it was this made passengers put up with his peculiar temper, because they felt they were safe with him, and also sure of a speedy journey.

"You are the best whip I ever saw," said Essie, and the driver's face brightened at her words. Praise from Miss Essie was much to be prized.

"I took good care to save the best of 'em for to-day," he replied. "They are not a bad lot, and what's more, they are fresh. Some of the others have been doing double shifts for them."

"That is not fair!" said Essie.

"It did the beggars no harm; I'll give them a good rest for it another day," replied Dodd. "Would you like to take a hand at the ribbons?"

"I should, indeed," replied Essie.

Digary stood up, and she slipped behind him into his seat, and almost before the others were aware of the move, held the reins.

"Well done," said Alan. "Very smart work, indeed. You changed places quickly."

"Don't throw us over, please, Essie," shouted Dr. Gavin from the rear.

"I feel we are in danger," laughed Milly.

"Behave yourselves," Essie said, "or you will find I can be exceedingly nasty and empty you all out."

"Be merciful!" said Alan.

"Think of Digary's coach," said her father. "Please do not damage it."

"She can drive nearly as well as myself," grunted Digary. "Just look how she handles them."

Essie certainly made a very good attempt, and as the horses were somewhat tired, she had no trouble with them.

When they reached the end of Digary's stage, he took Edwin Holt aside, and said:

"Will you do me a favour?"

"With pleasure!" replied Edwin.

"Then put me a few pounds on Jovial for the Brisbane Cup; Miss Essie says he will win it," said Dodd.

"I'll tell you the best plan," said Edwin. "Leave it to me, and I will put your money on the one we back on the day of the race."

"All right!" said Digary. "You can run up as far as a tenner for me; but stop if you lose that."

"I will; and I feel sure we shall win a race of some description, if we do not actually land the Cup."

From Townsville they had a fair passage to Brisbane, and the horses were landed in good

condition. They were taken to Edgar's stables until they could be removed to Ipswich.

Tom Edgar was much interested in the new arrivals. All three were entered in the Brisbane Cup and Moreton Bay Handicap, and Tattoo and Jovial figured in other events.

The brown four-year-old purchased by Edgar and the trainer Kearn from Mr. Holt, had turned out even better than the astute partner of Black Tommy expected. So well had he done that the trainer considered his chance for the Cup exceedingly good, and he and Edgar backed him for the double event with most of the bookmakers. Tom Edgar knew that the Glengarry team was not to be despised, but he was anxious to see the horses at work, so that Luke Kearn might form an opinion about them.

Dick Edgar and Barry Green were in charge of them at the stables.

Tom Edgar considered it the best policy to try and keep on good terms with his nephew.

Dick was surprised at the advances he made, and mistrusted them. He was still more surprised when his uncle asked them to stay at his house, which adjoined the stables, and was therefore handy for them.

"What does it mean?" said Dick.

"That we are better off than we expected in the matter of lodgings," replied Barry.

"He has some motive in asking us to stay with him," said Dick.

"If he thinks he can get any information from us about the horses, he's mistaken," answered Barry.

"We must be on our guard. He has a way of drawing you into a conversation before you know where you are."

"He won't draw me," said Barry confidently.

"That remains to be seen," thought Dick. "I know him; he does not."

Tom Edgar was not aware the horses were going to Ipswich. It wanted over three weeks to the races, and he expected they would be galloped at Eagle Farm. In that time they would be able to find out what they could do.

After seeing the horses "done up" for the night, they left their companion in charge, and went into Tom Edgar's house.

They were hospitably entertained, and Tom, in a burst of confidence, confessed that he had not always treated Dick properly, and that he was not quite sure but he deserved that crack over the head.

"What's coming next?" thought Dick.

"He'd no business striking you," said Barry, "and you ought not to have molested him. I don't believe in it at all."

"He aggravated me at times," said Tom.

"No doubt," replied Barry. "He has done the same by me, but I've forgiven him."

"A nice team of horses you brought down," said Tom.

"He's opening fire," thought Dick, as he glanced at Barry.

"A moderate lot," replied Barry quietly.

"All bred in the bush," said Dick.

"None the worse for that," replied Tom. "How are they bred?"

"It's difficult to say. Jovial is, we think, by The Monk, and Tearaway by Chance; but what Tattoo's by is a mystery," said Dick.

"He's the old horse?" asked Tom.

"Yes; not up to much," said Barry.

"Being trained up country is against them," said Tom.

"Not a bit of it," replied Barry, firing up at any disparaging remark of this kind.

"Then they have been well-trained?" said Tom.

"Rather. No fault can be found with their preparation. We've had several good gallops," went on Barry, and Dick wished him far enough. He knew his uncle was urging him on.

"Trials, I expect you mean," said Tom.

"Call 'em that if you like," said Barry. "I prefer gallops."

"And I suppose you have found out which is the best?"

"Not a bit of it," said Dick. "Why, old Tattoo won one day, and I rode him, so if that gallop is correct, they are not up to much."

Tom Edgar scowled at his nephew. He wished he had Barry to himself; he could handle him to his satisfaction. He plied him with whisky, and Barry became talkative.

"Which do you like best?" asked Barry. "You have had a good look at them."

"I cannot very well judge from seeing them in the

stable," said Tom, "but if looks count, then I like Jovial."

"Not a bad pick," replied Barry. "Not half a bad pick. I shall not be at all surprised if he proves the best."

Dick fidgeted in his chair, said he was tired, and would be glad of a night's rest.

"Then go to bed," said his uncle eagerly.

"Come along, Barry," said Dick.

"He will stay up and have another whisky or two," replied Tom. "Mr. Green is a man; you are only a boy."

Barry was seldom called Mr. Green, and he relished the sound; it proclaimed he was of some importance.

"Quite right. Dick's a mere lad," he answered. "Go to bed, young 'un, and leave me to talk to your uncle."

"If you are not ready to go I will wait for you," said Dick.

"I don't wish you to sit up for me. Off you go."

Dick settled down in his chair again, much to his uncle's disgust, but he made no further remark.

Barry helped himself to more whisky, and his tongue was now wagging freely. He commenced to enlarge upon the system of training adopted at Glengarry, and although Dick attempted several times to stop him, he did not succeed.

Much to his companion's disgust, Barry gave Tom Edgar full particulars of how Essie rode the horses

at work, and also described the gallop in which Miss Rolt took part.

"It was nothing to go upon," said Dick.

"Oh yes, it was," snapped Barry.

"Which horse won?" asked Tom.

"Tattoo," replied Dick.

"But Jovial would have won had he been all right," said Barry.

"And what about Tearaway?" asked Tom.

"We hardly know how good he is," replied Barry confidentially.

Tom Edgar, after these remarks, was more anxious than ever to see the horses galloped. He was certain Dick could have enlightened him had he wished, and he had more faith in his judgment than Barry's.

"Have you secured stabling for them near the course?" asked Tom.

"Yes," replied Dick, meaning Ipswich, not Eagle Farm.

"Whose stables will they be in?"

"Alan Rolt's."

"But he has no stables near Eagle Farm; he has a private track at Ipswich, and trains there, and on the course," replied Tom.

"I know that," said Dick.

"But the horses are not going to Ipswich."

"Oh yes, they are, and to-morrow morning," said Dick, glad to put a spoke in his wheel, for he knew his uncle was reckoning on seeing them do their gallops.

"I never heard of such a thing," he replied. "Fancy

dragging them up to Ipswich when there is a much better track at Eagle Farm. There's no reason in it."

"I think there is," said Dick.

Barry was fast asleep in his chair.

"Give it me!" growled his uncle.

"Mr. Holt believes it will be more private there, and he does not want a lot of people prying around, trying to find out all about his horses. I don't blame him; do you?"

Tom Edgar made no reply. He knew Dick understood him, and was pleased he would not have a chance of seeing the horses on Eagle Farm. If he could not watch them there, he was determined someone should keep an eye on them at Ipswich.

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-FIRST

*TRAPPED*

WHEN Luke Kearn came to Brisbane and found the horses gone to Ipswich, he was disappointed.

"There is not much chance of getting at their farm there," he said.

"It's bad luck, that's what it is," grumbled Tom.

"What must we do?"

"Find someone to watch them at work; that is the only way."

"Can you put your hand on the right man?" asked the trainer.

"I have a handy lad here who would do the work well; he is a cunning fellow, and a good judge of horses' track work."

"Who is he?" asked the trainer.

"Bent—Ben Bent. He has ridden work sometimes for you when you have been short-handed," replied Tom.

The trainer shook his head doubtfully. "Has he sufficient experience?" he remarked.

"Yes, more than you think. He sneaks away to Eagle Farm in the morning whenever he can, and I have heard him give very accurate accounts of the gallops."

"If we can do no better, we must rely upon him,"

said Luke. "We ought to have some idea what these horses can do, although I do not expect they will have much chance with our lot."

"Don't be too sure of it; that fellow Barry told me they were well trained."

"What the deuce does he know about it?" said the trainer.

"Not much, perhaps; but Edwin Holt is no fool with horses," replied Tom.

After this conversation Ben Bent was sent to Ipswich in the afternoon, with strict injunctions to find out all he could about Edwin Holt's horses. The task suited him, and he was as eager to ascertain the strength of the team as Tom or Luke.

He prowled around the outskirts of the town, and eventually found Alan Rolt's private track not far from his house. The land was well fenced, and it was evident the owner did not intend to have intruders.

There was a strong fence with close palings, and protected with barbed wire. It was over five feet high, and Ben Bent was too small to see over it, and he would not glean much by peeping through the rails. The difficulties he had to encounter roused his energies, and he determined not to be beaten.

He cautiously walked round the fence, examining it carefully, and at the far side found an opening, through which he managed to squeeze. Inside he found a water hole surrounded with a tangled mass of creepers, bushes, and stunted trees. The spot seemed neglected and out of keeping with the

remainder of the grounds. There was a tumble-down wooden shed, and Ben looked inside and saw it was empty. This he selected as a suitable spot to hide in before the horses came out to work. When they were on the track he could crawl amongst the bushes and obtain a good view of them.

Tom Edgar had given him a minute description of the three horses, and he was to keep a wary eye upon them. Red Streak he knew, and as there would probably be a trial with him, it was important to find out the result, because Alan Rolt's horse was a good one, and Luke Kearn knew his form to an ounce.

Ben Bent, quite satisfied with his exploration, returned to Ipswich. He was provided with sufficient money for his wants, and also to judiciously treat people who seemed likely to be able to give information.

As soon as it was light next morning, he proceeded to his hiding-place, and after a brief wait he saw half-a-dozen horses come into the track, followed by several people on horseback. There was no trial that morning, but he picked out the horses according to the description given, and had no doubt he had correctly named them. Being a long walk to the town, he brought his breakfast with him, and finished it before returning.

Unfortunately for the success of his plans, he had been seen by Pete Wrench, Alan's trainer, who was always on the look-out for intruders. It was at Pete's request that Alan left the hut and bushes untouched.

"If anyone is prowling around, that is the place for hiding in; it will prove a regular trap for horse watchers," he said.

Alan laughed, and let him have his way, not having much faith in the plan until it succeeded. More than one inquisitive tout had fallen into Pete's disused hut trap, and Tom Edgar's emissary was the last victim.

Pete chuckled to himself as he caught sight of Ben's form in the bushes, and determined to have him next morning.

"There will be some sport to-morrow," said Alan, to whom Pete had imparted his intention. "My trainer has discovered a prying tout, and we are going to trap him, and find out all about him."

"What fun!" exclaimed Essie. "You will not hurt him?"

"Oh, dear, no! merely find out who employs him, and then return him to his master with my compliments—that generally has the desired effect," replied Alan, laughing.

"How are you going to trap him?" asked Edwin Holt.

"Pete has a clever contrivance for catching uninvited spectators," replied Alan. "There is an old hut near the track, surrounded by bushes; it is a deserted-looking spot, and favourable for concealing a spy. Pete is ingenious. He had a couple of palings broken in the fence near this spot, and that makes an excellent opening into his trap. We

have had more than one trespasser in it, and I hope to-morrow we shall capture another."

"Did you see anyone about?" asked Essie.

"No, but Pete did; he always looks out for someone there," replied Alan.

"I wonder who he is, and where he comes from," said Edwin.

"The news of the arrival of your horses from Glengarry caused a wild sensation in Brisbane," replied Alan. "The papers gave full descriptions of them, and now they are here, the interest in them has increased. Many people will be anxious to know if they have any chance of winning, and will try to ascertain how they go in their gallops. This fellow probably comes from Brisbane, and may be employed by a bookmaker or a trainer."

Ben Bent was at his post again when the horses appeared, and was very glad when he saw them come towards the hut.

"I shall get a good look at them now," he thought.

Pete Wrench halted his team close to the bushes, and waited there until Alan and his friends rode up. He had sent a couple of men round to the gap in the fence, with instructions to them to pounce upon the delinquent as he lay watching. In order to concentrate Ben's attention, Pete commenced to talk in a loud tone about the horses.

Ben Bent strained every nerve in order to catch the drift of his remarks, and while his attention was concentrated upon the horses and the trainer, he

suddenly felt himself pinned from behind and dragged to his feet; then, with scant ceremony, he was pushed through the bushes, which scratched him, and at the same time protected his captors, until he stood shamefacedly before the laughing group, all delighted at his discomfiture.

"There he is," said Pete gleefully. "Another rat caught in my trap. You will be pleased to know that hole in the fence, and the neglected hut, were specially protected in order to catch such fellows as yourself."

Ben saw how he had been caught, and inwardly cursed his stupidity for not scenting danger. Now he came to think of it, the trap was very easy to find, far too handy to be safe.

"Where do you come from?" asked Alan.

Ben Bent made no reply.

"Silence is your game, is it?" snapped the trainer. "We'll soon knock you into a talking mood; answer Mr. Rolt's question at once."

Still he refused to speak, and Alan said quietly:

"If you do not answer my questions you will be taken before the magistrates; you had far better leave it to me to settle with you."

Ben Bent thought so too, and said sullenly: "I come from Brisbane."

"I thought as much," replied Alan, looking at Edwin Holt, as much as to say, "We shall have something interesting now."

"Who sent you down here?"

This question placed Ben in a predicament. He

must answer it, or be sent before the justices, and if he confessed, Tom Edgar would probably "sack" him, and thrash him before doing so.

"Answer my question," said Alan sharply.

"Tom Edgar."

"Then he has no more horses of mine in his stables," said Edwin Holt angrily.

"Why were you sent here?" asked Alan.

"To find out all I could about the horses."

"And have you discovered anything?"

"No."

"Do you know what I am going to do with you?"

"No."

"You richly deserve a flogging, but as there are ladies present, you will escape. I am going to send you back to Brisbane with a message for your master."

Ben was relieved; he had no intention of delivering it.

"And I shall send two companions with you, so that you may not be lonely or forget to deliver it."

Ben was crushed again, and saw no way of escape.

"You can have Barry and Dick," said Edwin. "It will just suit them to take a rise out of Black Tommy."

"I can answer for myself," said Dick.

"Take him to the stables and lock him up until we are ready for him," said Alan, and Ben was marched off between his captors.

"That is the best possible way of dealing with him," said Dr. Gavin.

"He will have a warm reception from Edgar," said Alan, laughing.

After the horses finished their work, Edwin Holt said :

"Edgar must have strong reasons for taking such a step."

"I hear they think they can win the Cup, probably the double, with Cudgewa. Luke Kearns trains him ; he is the brown colt they bought from you," replied Alan.

"That's their game, is it?" said Edwin. "I hope we shall not be beaten by a horse bred at Glengarry, at any rate."

"Cudgewa is reported to be something out of the common, and Kearns thinks him a real good one."

"I suppose Edgar was anxious to find out how our horses shaped with Red Streak."

"Quite so. Kearns has Nettle still, and as he ran second to my horse, they would have something to work upon if they knew how your lot shaped with Red Streak," said Alan.

Dick Edgar and Barry Green were amused at the idea of taking Ben Bent to Brisbane, and delivering him over to the tender mercies of Black Tommy.

"There will be a row," said Dick gleefully.

"You're fonder of rows than I am, to look pleased over the prospect," said Barry.

"You'll enjoy seeing my excellent relative in a towering rage," said Dick.

"What will he do?"

"What will he not do?" said Dick. "His language

will be lurid. He will probably become violent, and we must be prepared for him."

"No fighting for me," growled Barry.

"He'll not fight," said Dick, "but he'll quarrel a lot."

"That don't hurt," said Barry.

"If there is any striking to be done, the fellow we have to deliver over to him will reap the benefit."

"Good luck to him!" said Barry.

"He'll require it," answered Dick.

In the afternoon they proceeded to Brisbane by train, Ben Bent occupying a seat between them, in no enviable frame of mind.

Alan wrote a brief letter to Tom Edgar, and had Ben known the contents, he would have been still more uneasy, for they were not calculated to appease the wrath of Black Tommy.

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-SECOND

*A DISCORDANT  
NOTE*

ON arriving in Brisbane, they walked direct to Edgar's stables. Entering the yard, they saw Black Tommy at the far end, in conversation with Luke Kearn.

Since Bent went to Ipswich, the trainer came in regularly for information, and he was impatient at nothing of importance having been found out.

"Give him time," said Black Tommy. "He can't send an account of a gallop that has not taken place."

"It's my opinion he is in lumber," growled Luke. "We have not heard from him for two days."

"He's too sharp for that," replied Tom, and as he spoke the trainer caught sight of Ben entering the yard.

"I'm right, anyway," said Luke. "Here he comes, and he appears to be well looked after."

Tom Edgar scowled, swearing a fierce oath, when he saw Barry and Dick. He knew Ben had been caught, and was now returned to him.

"You act as spokesman," said Barry, and Dick said to his uncle:

"Mr. Rolt has sent this fellow to you with his compliments. He was caught trespassing on his

private ground, and when questioned he confessed you had sent him to watch the horses at work."

"Under compulsion," said Ben ; "I held my tongue until I was forced to speak."

"That's true," said Barry.

"Give him Mr. Rolt's note," said Dick, and Ben handed it to Tom Edgar, who tore it open, and his face grew purple with rage as he read as follows :

"I have much pleasure in returning this young scoundrel to the older scoundrel who sent him here. You deserve to be reported to the Turf Club, and it rests with Mr. Holt whether I take this step or not. Unless you apologise for your contemptible action I shall certainly take it upon myself to report you. I hope Kearns knows nothing of this. If I find out he has sanctioned it, he knows how the authorities will deal with him. Mr. Holt wishes me to add that he is thoroughly disgusted at your conduct, and that he will not use your stables again under any circumstances."

He handed the letter to Kearns, who felt decidedly uncomfortable as he read it. He knew if he was reported to the Club his license would be forfeited.

"Have you any message to send back?" asked Dick.

His uncle would have liked to knock him down, but he controlled his temper, for he knew what he said would be reported to Alan Rolt.

"I didn't see much harm in it," he said. "It's often done, and no notice is taken of it."

"You can tell Mr. Rolt I knew nothing of this

until I read his letter," said the trainer, with a sharp glance at Tom Edgar.

"I will do so," replied Dick, who suspected this statement was untrue.

"You can also tell Mr. Rolt that as we have found nothing out, no harm has been done," said Tom Edgar.

Dick smiled provokingly, as he replied :

"That is not your fault. You did your best to gain information, but we were too smart for you."

Tom glared at him, and said angrily :

"Your tongue is too sharp ; it will damage you some day."

"Come along," said Barry, who saw a row brewing, and had no desire to take part in it.

"The sooner you clear out the better," roared Tom.

"Shall we take this fellow with us ?" asked Dick. "He will probably be safer in our hands."

"You leave him here," said Tom Edgar.

"With pleasure," replied Dick. "He's not fit for decent society—no more are you."

"If I have any more of your insults I'll flog you again."

"Don't," said Dick. "Recollect what you got the last time you struck me."

Barry took Dick by the arm, and dragged him down the yard.

Tom Edgar shook his fist at them, and yelled out that he would be even with Dick before long.

"Try it on, uncle dear," shouted Dick.

Black Tommy was about to rush after his tormentor when Luke Kearn pulled him back, and said :

"Let them go ; you will only make matters worse ; it is quite bad enough now."

Tom Edgar turned on the helpless Ben, and seizing him by the collar of his coat, laid on to him with the buckle end of a strap until the lad howled with pain.

"D—n it, stop that !" said the trainer, seizing his arm. "You're a brute, Tom ! The lad did his best ; it's not his fault."

"Leave go," said Edgar, who was beside himself with passion.

"Put that strap down, or I'll throw up working for you," said Luke.

Tom Edgar gave the lad a parting kick, and Ben Bent, as he limped away, muttered to himself :

"If Mr. Rolt does not report you to the Committee, I will ; that will pay you out. You ought to have thought of it before you struck me."

"You have done a very foolish thing," said the trainer. "That lad may 'split'."

"He dare not," growled Tom. "He'd get into trouble himself."

"He'll not care about that, so long as he can put a spoke in your wheel."

"And yours too."

"He'll not say anything about me after what I have done for him."

"I call it a dirty trick to put all the blame on to me," said Tom.

"I did it for the best. If Mr. Rolt reports you, I can still go on with Cudgewa's preparation. If I had my license taken away, we should be in a nice mess."

"Here, you, come back!" shouted Tom Edgar to Ben, as he limped down the yard.

Ben hesitated, and Kearn said :

"Come here ; he'll not hit you again ; he's sorry for it. He was in a rage or he would not have done it."

Ben Bent slowly returned, and Kearn said :

"Here's a sov. for you ; that will ease your back a bit."

"And I'll give you a fiver if you promise to say nothing about this affair at Ipswich," said Edgar, who knew he had done a foolish thing.

"It's worth more than that," said Ben.

Kearn laughed as he said : "He's no fool ; you'll have to part, Tom."

Edgar was on the point of giving the lad another thrashing for his impertinence, and looked round for the strap, but the trainer had taken the precaution to throw it away.

"How much do you want to hold your tongue?" asked Kearn, who knew the lad ought to be "squared" to keep silent.

"Twenty pounds," said Ben.

Tom Edgar gasped in astonishment.

"I'll not give it," he said.

"Then keep it," replied Ben, as he turned round.

"Stop a minute," said Kearn. "I'd advise you to give it him," he whispered to Tom.

"Come to my office to-night, and we'll settle the matter," said Tom.

"All right," replied Ben, who said to himself:

"I'll take his money. If he behaves well to me in the future I'll keep my promise, but if he ever hits me again I'll give him away, promise or no promise."

Dick Edgar reported all that had taken place at Brisbane on his return to Capella.

"So Kearn says he knows nothing of it, or rather that he knew nothing of it before reading the letter?" said Alan.

"Yes."

"Do you think he spoke the truth?"

"No."

"Why do you think he did not?"

"For one thing, I do not think my uncle would have handed him the letter had he been in ignorance of what had taken place."

"Perhaps not. On the other hand, he may have shown it him to enlighten him."

"You can take my word for it, he knew all about it," said Barry. "I watched his face as he read the letter, and he seemed in a deuce of a fright."

"I agree with Barry," said Edwin Holt; "but we may let the matter drop now, I think. They have had a severe lesson, and as they have discovered nothing, we need not trouble ourselves further."

To this Alan agreed, although he would have preferred to lay the matter before the Committee

of the Queensland Turf Club. Pete Wrench was also disappointed that the affair was to be allowed to drop. Kearn had served him one or two nasty tricks before he left Eagle Farm to undertake the training of Alan's horses at Capella. On one occasion Kearn asked him to "give him a gallop" with one of his horses, and he consented. Kearn altered the weight his horse had to carry, and consequently knew a good deal more about the result of the trial than Wrench. In the race, Pete's horse, having won the trial easily, astonished him by failing to extend the one owned by Kearn, which won the race. He discovered some time afterwards that Luke Kearn had put an extra stone on his horse in the trial. In consequence of this incident, and other matters, Pete Wrench was sorry Alan decided to move no further in the matter.

"We had the beggars fairly caught this time," grumbled Pete. "I wish you had reported it."

"Don't worry about it, Pete," replied Alan. "I have no doubt they will both get into trouble without any help from us."

"I hope so," answered Wrench.

Red Streak was known to be in form, and consequently, when Jovial beat him at even weights in a sound gallop, Essie was delighted.

"Now, what do you think of his chance?" she asked Alan triumphantly, and he replied that he thought the Cup ought to fall to her lot. "And Tearaway and Tattoo will have to be contented to run for small stakes," she said.

"It looks like it," said her father, "although it is curious how Dick hankers after the old horse still. He says Tattoo has never tried his best since he won at Glengarry."

Essie tossed her head and said: "Dick is prejudiced. Tattoo beating Jovial; it is absurd!"

Alan Rolt and Essie passed much of the time together, and Edwin Holt was not displeased at his host's evident preference for her society.

True, Essie was young, but it was desirable her first love should be a man of good character and honourable. Alan Rolt was in every respect, Edwin Holt thought, a suitable match for her.

The more Essie saw of Alan the better she liked him, and at last she commenced to realise what he meant when he told her he loved her.

When the truth came home to her, it made her more shy and reserved with him; but he was pleased rather than otherwise, and augured favourably from it.

Her father also saw something new had entered her life, and guessed what it was, but he did not speak to her, not thinking it wise to interfere at this stage.

As Alan glanced over the paper one morning, he saw the *Karumba* had arrived in Brisbane again, and he muttered to himself:

"I hope Loyd will not have the cheek to come up here after the hints he has received."

Milly also saw the arrival list, and Alan knew she anticipated Lance Loyd's visit.

He spoke to her about it, and asked her if she thought he would come to Capella.

"I see no reason why he should remain away," she replied.

"Except the very excellent reason that he knows his visits are distasteful to me."

"Perhaps he considers me as well," replied Milly.

"Surely you do not care for him?" exclaimed her brother.

"I hardly know," she replied thoughtfully. "Sometimes I think I do; at other times I am rather afraid of him."

"Afraid?" echoed Alan.

"Yes; I can hardly explain it, but I can describe my feelings in no other way."

"It is impossible for you to like a man you are afraid of."

"Strange to say it is not."

"In what way are you afraid of him?"

"He is masterful, and has a way of brushing aside objections which sometimes frightens me."

"Do you mean he is rude to you?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then, whatever do you mean?"

"I really do not know; I cannot explain it," said Milly.

"Then, the less you see of him the better," replied her brother.

"You have made that remark before."

"It bears repeating," he said.

Much to Alan's annoyance, Lance Loyd came to

Capella as soon as he could leave the steamer. Alan received him coolly, and he was desperately annoyed when he saw him claim acquaintance with Essie in a very familiar way.

"Hang his confounded impertinence," said Alan. "Not contented with making a fool of Milly, he must try and flirt with Essie."

Edwin Holt saw that Lance Loyd's arrival caused discord at Capella. He did not like the man, but he had no cause to dislike him. He quickly discovered the chief officer and Milly Rolt seemed to understand each other, and this annoyed him. He wondered at her preference for a man of his stamp, and thought she had more common sense than to be led away merely by good looks. He also saw that Alan disliked him, and he found some satisfaction in this.

"If he finds no pleasure in his society, why does he invite him here?" said Edwin Holt to himself. "Can it be on Milly's account? I hope not."

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-THIRD

ESSIE LEARNS  
TO LOVE

LANCE LOYD, as chief officer of the *Karumba*, did not receive a large salary. Had he not lived the greater part of his time on board, he would have found it difficult to make both ends meet ; and even now he was in debt, and some of his creditors were pressing. He spent considerably more than he earned, consequently he was always short of money, and from time to time he negotiated loans.

On the arrival of the *Karumba* in Brisbane, a bookmaker he owed some fifty odd pounds pressed for a settlement, and threatened to make matters unpleasant if the money was not forthcoming. At first Lance Loyd laughed, and tried to pass it off, saying he must wait until he had a win.

"You have owed me the money over twelve months," said Sim Tyne ; "it is time I had it."

"How can I pay you when I have not the money?"

"Borrow it."

"To pay you?"

"Yes."

"A nice idea that!"

"I mean to have it somehow."

"Don't be a fool, Sim. I'll pay you when I make

arise. If you worry me, you will stand a bad chance of getting it."

Sim felt angry, and looked it. He had paid Lance Loyd sums of money from time to time when he won, but when he lost he found it difficult to make him part.

"You have treated me very shabbily," said Sim; "but there is something you can do for me which may put money in our pockets, and enable you not only to clear off your debts, but have a good balance remaining."

"That sounds better; what am I to do for you?"

"You know Mr. Rolt of Capella, and visit there."

"Yes, occasionally."

"Edwin Holt of Glengarry has brought three horses down to run at Eagle Farm, and they are reported to be a very fair lot. He is at Capella with the horses."

"I have met him," replied Loyd. "He and his daughter went to Townsville with us last trip."

"That's good!" replied Sim.

"What are you driving at? out with it! As a rule, bookmakers prefer to take money out of a man's pocket, rather than help him to put it in."

"Run down to Ipswich, and find out which is the best horse belonging to Mr. Holt. If you can manage this, and it ought to be easy enough, we shall be in a position to win some money."

"That is what I desire," replied Lance, "but I do not care to do as you ask; it would be a shabby trick."

"Not a bit of it! We can keep the knowledge you obtain to ourselves, and no harm will be done."

"It seems to me like betraying a confidence given in friendship."

Sim Tyne shrugged his shoulders, and said :

"You are very particular. I am showing you a safe way to pay your debts, and you decline to take advantage of it."

"Even if I find out all you wish to know, it does not follow the horse will win," said Lance.

"There's no certainty in racing, as you are well aware ; but if we learn which is the best of Holt's lot, we shall know which to back, and not throw any money away on the others," replied Sim.

"You will promise to keep it a secret ?"

"Yes ; it will be to my advantage."

"Then I will do as you ask, on one condition."

"That is ?"

"You cancel the bet I owe you."

"Fifty pounds is a stiff sum."

"It's nothing to you," said Lance, "but it means a lot to me."

"I will agree to it," replied Sim ; "and you are lucky to get off so well."

Lance Loyd felt rather uneasy when he commenced to follow out Sim Tyne's instructions. It lowered him in his own estimation, and he wished he had declined the proposal.

Milly Rolt treated him coldly. She had not forgotten the remark in Essie's letter.

"You met Mr. Holt and his daughter on the *Karumba*," said Milly.

"They travelled with us to Townsville on our last trip," he said. "They were very friendly."

"And of course you made yourself agreeable."

"Naturally. It is part of my duties as chief officer to make myself agreeable to the passengers. Miss Holt is a very nice girl, and I like her father."

He wondered why Milly avoided him, and thought perhaps her brother had interfered. He cared little for Alan's opinion, provided Milly was on his side. He fully intended proposing to her. She had money, and in a selfish way he was fond of her, and flattered himself she was not indifferent to his attentions, or had not been until his present visit.

Although Milly was not following Alan's advice to avoid Lance Loyd, she did not feel so well disposed towards him as usual.

Edwin Holt had paid her attentions which she could not fail to understand. She felt flattered by his preference, for she knew he was a man well calculated to make a woman happy. She took very little account of the difference in their ages.

Lance Loyd saw a possible rival in Edwin Holt, although he scouted the idea that Milly would prefer the older man. Still it was possible this, to some extent, accounted for her changed attitude towards him.

Essie, with her usual good-nature, he found the most inclined to talk about the horses. Alan did not broach the subject, and he hardly cared to approach Edwin Holt.

He felt some qualms of conscience at his endeavours to abstract the information he required from Essie. The girl chatted innocently, and with pleasure, about her horses.

"I call them mine," she said, "but of course they belong to my father—or, at least, I consider they do, although he gave them to me."

"It was very kind of him," replied Lance.

"He is always kind," replied Essie.

"I am sure he is; he looks the personification of a good-natured, warm-hearted man."

"He is, indeed," replied Essie, "and I am afraid he spoils me."

"You are an only child, therefore it is permissible."

Essie laughed as she replied :

"I have always been given to understand spoilt children are disagreeable."

"You amply demonstrate in your own person that spoilt children are excellent company, and the reverse of disagreeable."

"Shall you be at the races?" said Essie.

"Fortunately, yes; the *Karumba* does not sail until the week after."

"Are you fond of it?"

"Racing?"

"Yes."

"Very. It has always had a fascination for me, and at times it has proved expensive."

"Then you bet?"

"Occasionally, when I fancy there is a good thing on, or some kind friend lets me into a stable secret."

He was urging her on, but he shrank from deliberately asking her a plain question as to which was the best horse. If she gave him the information voluntarily he would be relieved.

"Shall I let you into a secret?" she asked, smiling.

"If you think it advisable."

"I see no harm in telling you which of our horses I think the best. You are a friend of Mr. Rolt's, and as such are entitled to know what opinion I hold of our horses."

"Not entitled to know, but I shall be glad of your opinion if you think it well to give it me," he replied.

"I think Jovial is the best, and he has done a very good trial with Red Streak; he beat him at level weights. Have you seen Red Streak run?"

"Yes; I saw him when he beat Nettle. If Jovial is as good as Red Streak, he will win the Cup."

"I hope so," said Essie eagerly.

"You have two horses besides Jovial?"

"Yes; Tearaway and Tattoo."

"And can Jovial beat them?"

"He has done so more than once. On one occasion Tattoo won, but I think that may be put down as a fluke," replied Essie.

Lance Loyd was well-satisfied with this information, and also with the manner in which he obtained it.

Essie would have volunteered it him under any circumstances, and therefore he was entitled to make use of it.

He was not, however, justified in giving the

intelligence to Sim Tyne, to make use of for bookmaking purposes.

Finding the social atmosphere of Capella somewhat cool, and having obtained what he required, he took his departure, much to the relief of Alan, and also of Edwin Holt.

Alan had no right to speak to Essie about her frequent conversations with Lance Loyd, and it would have been more polite not to do so. He was, however, annoyed at Loyd's attentions to her, and vented his ill-humour on the object of them.

Essie resented this, and rightly so, and plainly told Alan that, as Mr. Loyd was his guest, she thought it proper to be sociable with him.

"I found him an interesting talker, and he is fond of racing."

"So your conversation was chiefly on racing topics?" said Alan, relieved.

"Principally," replied Essie, wondering why he inquired. "He said he would be at the races at Eagle Farm, and I told him Jovial was the best of our lot."

"That was imprudent," said Alan.

"Indeed. Why, may I ask?"

"Because such things are better kept quiet," said Alan.

"I do not think so," she replied. "What difference can it make?"

"Considerable, sometimes."

"In what way?"

"If you wished to back one of your horses to win

a good round sum, I expect you would like to have as long odds as possible ? ”

“ Yes, I suppose so.”

“ Then the fewer people in the secret the better,” he replied.

“ That may be so ; but Mr. Loyd is a friend of yours, and I saw no harm in telling him. Do you not like him ? ”

“ No.”

“ Then why have him here ? ”

“ He was not invited.”

“ Do you mean he came to Capella without an invitation ? ” said Essie, surprised.

“ On this occasion he did, but I invited him previously.”

“ Probably knowing your hospitable nature, he took it for granted you would be pleased to see him again,” said Essie.

“ That may be the case—I hope so.”

“ I think he admires Milly,” said Essie.

“ Do you ? What reason have you ? ”

“ A woman’s reason.”

“ And that is ? ”

“ Because he never mentions her to me, and he always leaves me to my own devices when your sister is to be found.”

“ I do not approve of his paying Milly attention.”

“ Does she ? ”

“ I really don’t know ; I confess I cannot make her out.”

“ He is not good enough for her,” said Essie.

"My opinion precisely."

"But I think you are rather hard upon him. It seems to me natural for everyone to love Milly ; she's a dear."

"Sometimes it is awkward to have too many admirers."

"Do admirers necessarily love ?"

"Something, I believe," he answered, smiling.

"Not at all. I can admire people without loving them."

"Am I admired, or loved ?" asked Alan seriously.

"Both," said Essie, and then suddenly checked herself. "I ought not to have said that, ought I ?"

"If you mean it," he replied. "Do you mean it, Essie ?"

"I think so."

"Not quite sure ?"

She did not reply, and he said :

"Is love or admiration predominant ?"

"You love me, and I love you. It is love predominates."

"Essie, do you really mean it ?" he said joyfully.

"I have told you before I like to be loved, and I try and return any affection lavished upon me."

"But I want you to love me better than anyone in the world," he said, taking her hands in his.

"Better than my father ?" she asked.

"No, not exactly, but differently. I do not want you to love me as you love your father."

Essie looked at him half-timidly and inquiringly.

"I do not understand you," she said.

"Sit down, and I will try and explain," he replied.  
She did so, and he went on :

"You told me at Glengarry you liked to be loved, and I knew you did not understand what I meant. Essie, I want you to love me as I love you. Some day I want you to be my wife."

She started, but did not speak.

"I want you to love me as a wife should her husband, to be all in all to each other, to live together all our lives. Now, do you understand me?"

"Yes; but you ask too much. How can I leave my father?"

"I think he will give you to me," said Alan, smiling, "if he believes it will make you happy. Would it make you happy, Essie?"

"I hardly understand it," she said simply, "but I believe it would."

He put his arm round her, drew her towards him, and kissed her.

It was the first lover's kiss she had ever received, and it thrilled her. She knew there was a difference between this love and all other loves. It did not frighten her, and she made no attempt to leave him.

"You do love me, Essie?" he said, in a voice vibrating with emotion.

"Yes, Alan, I love you," she replied; and again he kissed her.

They remained together for a long time, and when Edwin Holt saw them, he knew what had happened.

At the conclusion of his interview with Alan he said :

“ My little girl is very dear to me, but I feel I am entrusting her to an honest man, and one who will guard her from all harm. Alan, my boy, I could have wished for no better husband for my child. She is a treasure ; guard her as such ; ” and Alan vowed he would.

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-FOURTH

*JOVIAL WELL  
BACKED*

MILLY ROLT was delighted at her brother's engagement to Essie.

"I am so glad I am to have you for a sister," she said, as she kissed her fondly, "and I am sure Alan will be very happy."

"Yes, we shall be happy ; we love each other," said Essie simply.

"Then you believe love always brings happiness?" said Milly.

"Oh, yes ; how can it be otherwise?" replied Essie.

Milly was charmed with her simplicity, and hoped her faith in the power of love would never be shattered.

Now his daughter was to leave him in the near future, Edwin Holt thought it time to look after himself. Life at Glengarry without Essie would be very lonely, and he determined to ask Milly a question, and his happiness depended upon her answering satisfactorily. He thought, however, it would be better to wait a little while longer, but had no intention of returning to Glengarry without her decision.

When Lance Loyd arrived in Brisbane, he met

Sim Tyne at the Club. He was not in a good temper; his visit to Capella had not turned out a success. No man cares to think his absence is preferred to his presence, and he felt such was the case at Alan Rolt's.

"I hardly expected you back so soon," said Sim; "but if you have good news, so much the better."

"I wish I had not gone near the place," said Lance.

"I thought you liked the Rolts."

"So I do; but I did not meet with a very good reception this time."

"I'm sorry for that."

"It is not of much importance," replied Lance. "Young Rolt is a bit of a prig. I think he was annoyed at the preference Miss Holt showed for my society; he is a trifle sweet there, I fancy."

"I see," said Sim, laughing. "It's the old story. He'll get over it now you are away. Did you hear anything about the horses?"

"Yes."

"Which is the best?"

"Jovial."

"Who told you?"

"Miss Holt."

Sim gave a low whistle. "So you worked it that way," he said. "Perhaps Mr. Rolt smelt a rat."

"What do you mean by working it?" asked Lance angrily.

"Flirted with the young lady in order to get the information you required. It was clever," replied Sim.

"Let me tell you I did nothing of the kind!" retorted Lance. "She volunteered the information without my asking her."

"That was kind of her," said Sim sarcastically. "How much better is Jovial than the others?"

"That I do not know; but if he can beat Red Streak at level weights, he will win the Brisbane Cup," replied Lance.

"Beat Red Streak at level weights!" exclaimed the astonished bookmaker. "There must be some mistake."

"Not at all; that is what she said."

"What a real good thing," said Sim, with a chuckle. "We must back him at once. If Red Streak could not win the Cup in a canter with seven stone six, I'm a Dutchman!"

"It would be a certainty," said Lance.

"And Jovial is a certainty, I can assure you."

It was a surprise to everyone at Capella when they saw Jovial backed at ten to one for the Cup, to win a large sum.

"Who on earth has put the money on?" exclaimed Edwin Holt.

"I think I can guess," replied Alan, "and as Essie is not here I will tell you."

"What has Essie to do with it?" said her father, surprised.

"When Lance Loyd was here he talked a good deal about racing with her. I wondered why he did so, until Essie told me she had informed him Jovial was the best of your horses. This she did in a casual

way, never thinking anything would come of it, I am sure."

"Surely Mr. Loyd would not use the knowledge he obtained from her in such a way to back the horse for a lot of money. That would not be gentlemanly," said Edwin Holt.

"I quite agree with you ; but it seems to me that is precisely what has happened, and I am afraid he has given the information to others."

"That makes his conduct still worse," said Edwin Holt.

"He is not over flush of money, and Jovial must have been backed to win a lot to bring him to that price. If I thought he came here in order to obtain the information he received, I should write to him and tell him in plain language what I thought of such conduct."

"It is abominable," said Edwin Holt hotly. "I care very little about the price I have to accept about Jovial, but I think if Mr. Loyd has been guilty of such conduct, it is unwarrantable."

"I shall endeavour to find out the truth," said Alan. "I have several friends in Tattersall's who will be able to help me."

"Let the matter drop," said Edwin Holt. "If Mr. Loyd has acted in such a dishonourable way, he will sooner or later find out his folly."

"I wonder what Essie thinks about it," said Alan.

They were soon enlightened, for Essie came bounding into the room, and said delightedly :

"Jovial has been backed to win the Cup ;

that is good news. Someone must have faith in him."

They could not help laughing at the way she regarded it.

"So you are very pleased to think someone has invested on Jovial," said her father.

"Of course I am; I want him to start favourite."

"Oh, indeed," said Edwin, very much amused.

"Why are you laughing?" asked Essie.

"As a rule, owners of horses like to obtain good odds; they do not care for outsiders to make their horses favourites," he answered.

"I never thought of that," said Essie, calming down. "I wonder who put the money on." Then as it suddenly occurred to her, she said: "It would not be Mr. Loyd?"

Alan nodded as he said with a laugh: "You gave him the tip."

"So I did. I thought there was no harm in it."

"There ought not to have been," replied Alan. "I have told your father I think Mr. Loyd must have given a hint to someone else."

"It was wrong of him if he did," replied Essie.

"What is the use of bothering about it?" said her father. "It will be sufficient for us if Jovial wins."

"I do not like the idea of him winning a good stake at our expense," said Alan.

The backing of Jovial caused quite a stir in Brisbane.

Luke Kearn and Tom Edgar naturally thought

the commission came from Capella, especially as Lance Loyd executed the bulk of it.

They were disgusted when they discovered nearly all the double money for Jovial and Cudgewa had been snapped up.

"He will have to disgorge some of that if Jovial wins," said Tom, "or he'll not get a run for his money with Cudgewa."

"If that confounded lad of yours had not been caught, we might have scooped the lot instead of him," said Kearn.

Lance Loyd had arranged with Sim to work the commission, because he could then say he had backed Jovial himself. His excuse would be that he had no idea a small outlay would bring the horse down to such a price.

Pete Wrench was furious at being supplanted in the betting. Like most trainers, he always wished his employer to obtain the best price.

Essie confessed to him she was probably the innocent cause, but she said it so prettily, and smiled at him so sweetly, that he checked the angry retort which rose to his lips. His opinion of Lance Loyd was, however, expressed in no half terms.

Milly Rolt was ashamed of Lance's conduct, and his action played into Edwin Holt's hands, had he but known it. She knew he would not have been guilty of such a breach of hospitality.

Jovial's trial with Red Streak was considered quite sufficient, but Pete gave Tearaway and Tattoo a spin with some of Alan's horses.

Dick Edgar rode Tattoo, who again failed to run up to the form he showed at Glengarry.

"I can't make him out," said Dick, very disappointed. "He's a lot better than that gallop indicates."

"It's a pity he didn't show it," grumbled Pete. "He'll be no good to make the running for Jovial in the Cup. I think I shall advise Mr. Holt to scratch him."

"Don't do that," said Dick earnestly. "Something tells me he will run far better in a race."

"He's a good deal more likely to finish last than first," said Pete.

There was considerable argument over the question of the starting, or non-starting, of Tattoo for the Cup.

Essie was strongly in favour of not running him.

"He will finish last, and that will take a lot of the glory from Jovial's victory."

"So you are sure Jovial will win?" said Alan.

"Of course I am; it would be heresy to doubt it."

"Poor old Tattoo!" said Edwin. "I think we had better let him go to the post. Dick Edgar will—"

"You must not consider him," interrupted Essie.

"I wonder if he still has any faith in the horse?" said Edwin.

"Pete says he has," replied Alan.

"What does your trainer think?" asked Edwin.

"That he is not good enough to make the pace for Jovial."

"Let him take his chance," said Edwin.

"As you please, dad," replied Essie ; "but you will see he has no chance at all."

The time quickly passed, and the horses were sent to Brisbane, and stabled at the trainer's where Alan's team always stayed.

On the course, where they were exercised, much curiosity was evinced over them. Jovial was keenly watched, and the general impression was favourable. It was a difficult matter to secure good riders, but as Alan had no horse running in the Cup, his jockey was given the mount on Jovial.

Jack Carr had ridden the horse at work at Capella, and fancied his chance. He knew Red Streak was a good one, and was surprised when Jovial beat him.

Lance Loyd had no idea his conduct had been viewed in such an unfavourable light at Capella. His notion of honourable and dishonourable conduct differed materially from Alan Rolt's and Edwin Holt's. When he heard the horses had arrived from Ipswich, he drove out in the early morning to see them at work at Eagle Farm.

After the gallops he went across to Edwin and Alan, as though nothing out of the way had taken place.

He quickly discovered they had no desire to talk to him, and their manner was such he could not well pass it over.

"Have I offended you in any way?" he said to Alan.

"I wonder at your asking, after what has occurred," replied Alan.

Lance Loyd looked puzzled, and at a loss to account for his meaning.

"Do not feign ignorance," said Alan, in a tone of contempt. "Miss Holt told you in confidence, and as my guest, that Jovial was the best horse. Do you consider it gentlemanly to make use of that knowledge as you did?"

Lance wondered how much he knew. "I presume you allude to my backing Jovial?"

"Yes."

"I see no harm in it. I told Miss Holt I sometimes backed horses when I received good information, and it was after that she told me about Jovial."

"You need not attempt to shield yourself behind her," said Alan.

"I am not doing so; I merely tell you what happened."

"I presume you did not give the information to anyone else?" said Alan.

"No," replied Loyd.

"You must have put a large sum of money on," said Edwin.

"Large for me; but I had no idea the market was so limited. I am sorry if it has caused you annoyance."

"None whatever," replied Edwin; "but I do not approve of the way in which you have acted. My daughter knows very little about the ins and outs of racing, and it was unfair to take advantage of her."

"I had no intention of doing so, I assure you," replied Loyd.

They parted without any further remarks, and as they left Lance Loyd, Sim Tyne spoke to him.

"That's Tyne, the bookmaker," said Alan. "I wonder if he is a friend of Loyd's. I must make inquiries in that direction. He says he gave no one any information about Jovial, but I do not believe him. It is far more likely that such a man as Sim Tyne found the money, and Loyd worked the business for him."

"If he did such a thing as that, he deserves to be cut," said Edwin Holt.

"I have been called over the coals already," said Lance to Sim Tyne.

"About the backing of Jovial?"

"Yes."

"You can stand it. You'll win your money, and that will compensate you. What a grand-looking horse Jovial is! and the weight is ridiculous."

"Then you think him good enough to win?" said Lance eagerly.

"Win, my boy! The money is as good as in our pockets. Jack Carr rides, and he is one of the best we have."

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-FIFTH

*AT THE  
TOTALISATOR*

DICK EDGAR was sorely puzzled at the bad form recently shown by Tattoo on the track. He was perfectly certain the gallop at Glengarry was the true test of the horse's merits, and no fluke. That Tattoo was a stone behind Jovial he refused to believe, and when it was decided to run the horse in the Cup he was more than satisfied.

It was Dick's ambition to save a little money, and acquire some land. He had heard and read of the vast fortunes made in Queensland that had originated from very insignificant beginnings. If others succeeded, why should not he? Mr. Holt had promised to help him whenever he considered himself in a position to start "on his own."

Pondering over these things, Dick was struck with the idea that it would be a good plan to risk backing Tattoo, and not Jovial. He would probably be laughed at for his rashness, but he cared very little about that.

Without mentioning what he required the money for, he asked Edwin Holt to advance him thirty pounds, which he would repay on his return to Glengarry, the money he had saved being in the Cumberland Bank.

"I will let you have it, Dick," said Edwin, "but do not gamble it away. I assure you it will be safer in the bank."

"I'll not fool it away," said Dick.

"I suppose you will back Jovial, and I hope he will win ; but I have a sneaking regard for old Tattoo."

"Have you?" exclaimed Dick, in surprise. "I thought everyone had deserted him with the exception of myself."

"I want you to back him for me on the totalisator," said Edwin, "but only for a small amount. You must not mention it, or I shall never hear the last of it if he runs badly."

Dick promised to do so, and thought he would make his own investments at the same time.

There were several double books open on the Brisbane Cup, and Moreton Handicap, double, and Dick took several long shots about Tattoo and Jovial. "If Jovial misses the Cup," he thought, "he has a fair chance of landing the handicap." The bookmakers were only too pleased to lay liberal odds against such an unlikely double as Dick selected.

The morning of the race arrived, and Essie was nervously anxious as to the result.

"I wish I could ride Jovial," she said.

"I am very glad you cannot," replied Alan.

"I suppose you think I could not do him justice?"

"Not at all ; but sometimes it is dangerous riding in a race, and I do not want you to run any risks."

"I do hope he will win."

"So do I," replied Alan; "and you may be quite sure Jack Carr will do his best."

Edwin Holt met many old friends at Eagle Farm, and some of the best carriage horses driven to the course were bred at Glengarry.

Jovial was well backed before the race, and came down to six to one. The favourite was Cudgewa, at four to one, and Luke Kearn was very confident about him.

Tom Edgar was doubtful, and urged upon his partner the advisability of backing Jovial.

"Not at that price," replied the trainer. "Had we been first in the market it would have been different. The horse has a good chance, but I think Cudgewa is sure to beat him; he has come on very fast during the last couple of weeks. Mike Hearn likes his chance, and he's more sense than most jockeys, and he'll do his best to beat Carr, who is rather inclined to ride the high horse at times."

"How much do we stand to win on him?" asked Tom.

"A couple of thousand; and then there will be some good doubles going," said Luke.

"I'd give a good deal to beat Holt," growled Tom, "especially with a horse of his own breeding. He would be mad."

"And it is very likely to come off," said Luke. "It will be a good lark to offer to sell him Cudgewa if he wins."

Tom Edgar laughed as he replied: "I would not care to be the one to make it."

In the paddock Edwin Holt came across Tom Edgar, who tried to avoid him, but was unable.

Edwin Holt rated him soundly for sending Ben Bent down to Capella to tout the horses.

"It was a shabby trick," he said, "and I am surprised at your doing it. If you had asked me in a proper manner anything you wished to know, I would have given you the information when I thought proper. You found out nothing, and I am glad of it."

"I didn't mean any harm," said Tom, "and I hope you will overlook it. I am not a rich man, and I was anxious to find out if you had anything likely to beat Cudgewa."

"So you think the horse I sold your friend can win?"

"He has a real good chance."

"And who owns him?" asked Edwin.

"Luke Kearn; he is entered in his name."

"And I suppose you have a big share in him?"

"None at all; I don't own a hair of him," protested Tom; and he was so thoroughly in earnest about it that Edwin Holt knew he was not telling the truth.

"I think we shall beat you," said Edwin.

"With Jovial?"

"Of course."

"The other fellow has no chance, I suppose?"

"Tattoo?"

"Yes."

"You can judge for yourself by the betting; a hundred to three offered is not a promising quotation."

Alan Rolt joined them, and commenced to abuse Edgar in strong terms, which Black Tommy resented.

"You deserve to be warned off every course in the colony," said Alan angrily.

"It would take a better man than you to fix that up," replied Tom.

"We shall see about that. If I report you to the authorities they will make short work of you."

Edgar controlled his tongue with difficulty. He knew Alan had him in his power, and could make things very unpleasant.

Luke Kearn, seeing him with Alan and Edwin Holt, called him away, as he thought a row might take place, which would be very inconvenient at this particular time.

"You are a fool," said Luke. "What did you go talking to them for?"

"I could not avoid it. Holt spoke to me, and I had to answer him, and Alan Rolt came up as we stood talking."

"Did you hear any news?"

"Edwin Holt says Jovial will win."

"Of course; there's not much to be got out of that."

Essie and Milly caused many admiring glances to follow them as they moved about the lawn.

Dr. Gavin accompanied them, but Lydia was not present, having pleaded a headache and remained behind. The doctor was in high spirits. He had made sundry investments on Jovial, and was sanguine of winning.

He conducted them into the paddock, at the back of the stands, to see the horses saddled.

"There they are," said Essie, walking quickly in the direction of the two horses.

Jovial and Tattoo were being led round, and the former was greatly admired. The beautiful bay looked very fit, and Essie was enthusiastic about him.

"Is he not a beauty, Milly?" she said.

"Indeed he is; and he walks like a winner," she replied.

Compared with Jovial, Tattoo looked commonplace.

At the far side of the paddock Dick Edgar was talking to a diminutive jockey. It was Harry Swan, who had been engaged to ride Tattoo. The jockey was not at all sweet upon his mount, for Pete Wrench had given him strict orders that Tattoo was to make the running for Jovial, if he could travel fast enough, and at any rate he was to jump off well and keep going as long as possible.

These instructions he related to Dick, who said :

"Carry them out, and I shall not be at all surprised if you win the race."

"Win!" exclaimed the astonished jockey. "Has he any possible chance?"

"I think so."

"What do you know about him?"

Dick related how he had ridden Tattoo at Glengarry, and won on him.

"He made all the running then, and I think he likes it. Anyway, you have a chance of finding out

what he can do. Take my advice; do exactly as Wrench tells you, and you'll find I am not far out."

Harry Swan's face brightened considerably.

"I hate to be on a duffer," he said, "and I am glad you told me about Tattoo. I'll keep him going, never fear."

"Do you want a pound or two on him?" asked Dick. "He'll pay a big price on the tote."

"It's throwing money away," replied the jockey.

"Not at all. I am going to back him again."

"You have already put money on him?"

"Yes, and I have him in several doubles."

"Then put me a couple of pounds on the tote."

"All right," replied Dick.

Jack Carr walked across the paddock in the blue jacket and yellow cap which were Edwin Holt's first colours. Swan had on a red cap.

"There's Jack," said the jockey. "He's cock-sure of winning on Jovial."

"Is he?"

"So he told me."

They intercepted Jack Carr, and he said, smiling:

"Well, Harry, you have a mount, but I do not envy you the ride on old Tattoo."

"He's not such a bad-looking 'crock,'" replied Swan.

"Has Dick Edgar been 'kidding' you he can gallop?"

"He has been giving me a few words of encouragement, for which I am grateful. He is the only one who has done so."

Jack Carr laughed as he replied :

" Dick once won a gallop on him, and he's been fond of the old fellow ever since, I hear. I shouldn't wonder if he has been silly enough to back him."

" You have guessed right," replied Dick ; " I have a trifle on."

" Throwing money away," said Carr, as he moved on.

The horses were being saddled, and around them, in various parts of the paddock, were people surrounding them, curiously anxious to see the accustomed preparation.

Jovial was full of life, and lashed out freely as Pete tightened the girths.

A short distance away Barry Green was doing the same for Tattoo, Dick holding him by the bridle. The horse stood perfectly quiet, which caused several remarks to the effect that he was half asleep. One knowing backer said it was a pity to run him.

" Pull him by the head. Wake the old beggar up a bit !" growled Barry, who was not at all pleased at the remarks passed.

" He's all right," replied Dick. " Wait until he wakes up in the race."

Barry gave Tattoo a push, and the horse took it calmly, merely changing his position.

" Don't shove him about ; he might fall down," chaffed a cheeky stable lad.

Barry gave him an angry glance, but made no reply. He knew what an argument with such a precocious juvenile would lead to.

"There, he'll do!" exclaimed Barry, in disgust, as his head emerged from under the saddle flap. "I'll just fix this strap a bit tighter."

Dick pulled Tattoo by the bridle, and the horse followed him slowly, hanging his head. Essie saw him, and with a merry smile crossed over to tease Dick Edgar.

"I am glad Tattoo has someone to look after him," she said. "He takes some moving along."

"He's saving himself for the race," replied Dick, laughing.

"I am afraid he will not have much to do in it," said Essie.

"Would you be surprised if he beat Jovial?" asked Dick.

Essie said impatiently: "How can you be so absurd? He has no chance whatever of doing so."

Harry Swan was assisted into the saddle, and when Tattoo felt his light weight it seemed to rouse him. He suddenly developed an unlooked-for energy, and waltzed round so quickly that the people ran helter-skelter to get out of the way.

"Who said he had no life in him?" laughed Dick.

"He has been roused out of his sleep," replied Essie, "and the shock is too much for him. He will soon have a relapse."

On the contrary, Tattoo seemed to enjoy the fun, and Dick ran to his head to quieten him down. A few words from him pacified the horse, and Harry Swan remarked that he seemed to have plenty of go in him.

Dick Edgar went away to the totalisator to see how the horses were being backed. On Tattoo there was not a single ticket taken as yet. He slipped into the crowd, and followed the procession to the ticket office.

The bell rang rapidly as sovereign after sovereign went on to some popular horse.

"Twenty on No. 5," said the man a few feet in front of Dick, and he recognised his uncle as the applicant for the tickets on Jovial.

He laughed to himself as he pictured Black Tommy's face if the despised outsider Tattoo won.

Dick's turn came, and he called out: "Twenty on No. 10."

"That's a bit of saving money in case Jovial falls down," said one onlooker, and there was a laugh from the crowd round the barrier at Dick's expense.

He had put ten pounds on for himself and ten for Edwin Holt. Then he recollected Harry Swan, and took two more for him.

Passing out between the rails, he joined the crowd, and watched the number board.

"Two hundred on Cudgewa, one hundred and five on Jovial, fifty on The Snake, twenty-five on Plunder, twenty-two on Tattoo," said Dick.

So far, he held all the tickets on the Glengarry outsider.

"There will be a thumping dividend if Tattoo wins," said a voice near him. "I think I'll have a sov. on him."

Dick turned and saw Ben Bent. "You here!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Did you think Black Tommy had done for me?"

"I fancied it was not unlikely."

"He gave me a strapping, but I got even on him."

"How?"

"I threatened to split if he did not give me twenty pounds."

"Well! Did you get it?" asked Dick.

"Yes. Luke Kearn made him part, and I am playing a fiver of it 'up.' Has Tattoo any show?"

"A good rough outside chance," replied Dick.

"Then I'll put a pound on him," said Ben, as he fought and pushed into the struggling crowd in order to obtain his ticket.

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-SIXTH

*MAKING THE  
RUNNING*

THE horses, fifteen in number, were filing out into the straight as the party from Capella took their places on the stand. The crowd still surged round the totalisator, and the clerks were busy serving out tickets. Many people waited until the last moment in the hope of being on the right one.

"I wonder how many tickets have been taken on Jovial," said Essie.

"Over a couple of hundred when I came away," replied Dr. Gavin, "but he was not favourite."

"There he goes!" exclaimed Essie, as the blue jacket and yellow cap went past, closely followed by the blue and red cap on Tattoo.

If Jovial moved well, as he certainly did, Tattoo was not far behind him.

"The old fellow is in rare form to-day," said Edwin Holt. "It will be rather a joke if he beats Jovial."

"I shall not consider it a joke," said Essie.

"No more shall I," chimed in the doctor, as he thought of his investments.

"It seems impossible," was Alan's comment. "Yet he won that trial easily at Glengarry. I wish I had a trifle on him."

"Shall I put you anything on?" said the doctor.

"Yes; here's a fiver," said Alan.

Dr. Gavin rushed down the steps, and made for the totalisator. After some difficulty he obtained the tickets, and two for himself.

"Here you are," he said, as he handed them to Alan.

"Will you have one, Essie?" he asked.

"No, indeed, I am not going to desert Jovial."

"Will you have one, Milly?"

"No thank you. I will stand by Essie's choice."

"Then I must keep them," said Alan, laughing.

The horses were at the post, and Carr had drawn the inside position, with The Snake next to him. On the outside stood Tattoo and Plunder. Cudgewa was well placed in the centre.

Before he rode out of the paddock, Pete Wrench said to Harry Swan:

"Do not forget your orders. Make the pace as hot as you can if the brute will gallop."

"I'll not forget," replied the jockey, and thought to himself: "If Dick's opinion is correct, the pace will surprise a good many people."

He rode down the course alongside Jack Carr on Jovial, and the crack jockey said:

"Help me all you can, Harry; you have to make the pace."

"I'll do that for you. I suppose I am to win if Tattoo is good enough?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Carr sarcastically. "Win if you can, by all means."

"I'll try!" replied Harry, and Jack Carr laughed.

"Line up!" shouted the starter. "Get back there, Jim; mind that brute; he's a kicker, Jack; closer in, please, Swan, we don't want 'em spread out all over the track. Now then, are you ready?"

The horses lined up to the barrier in perfect order, and as the starter touched the spring, the tapes flew up, and away they went.

Bang went the shutters of the totalisator, accompanied by growls from the late comers, who had missed their chances, and probably saved money thereby.

Tattoo got off well, and Harry Swan rode him hard to get him in front. The old horse flew past the field in rare style, and as Jack Carr saw the blue jacket and red cap, he thought:

"It's all right; Tattoo will set them a good pace to-day."

Mike Hearn had been told by Luke Kearn to keep a wary eye on Jovial.

"I don't fear anything else in the race," he said, "because I have their measure; but this bush horse is an unknown quantity to me. They say he's as good as Red Streak at even weights, but that's all bosh."

Hearn was riding Cudgewa carefully close behind Jovial. The Snake and Plunder were in front of them, and then came Wanderer and None Nicer. The remainder were close up.

Past the stand the first time the Glengarry outsider held a long lead, quite a dozen lengths, and Essie looked at him in amazement.

"Tattoo is spreading himself to-day," said Dr. Gavin.

"He will soon fall back," replied Essie; but she felt anxious nevertheless.

She was a good judge, and she knew Tattoo was galloping in rare form. What if he won, after all?

"Will you accept a ticket now?" asked Alan, smiling.

"I think I will," replied Essie, laughing.

"That's not fair," said her father.

"All's fair in love and racing," laughed Alan, as he handed her a ticket. "You had better take one now, Milly."

"Again I will stand by Essie," she replied, with a smile.

"Now, we are all on him," said Dr. Gavin.

Essie looked round in surprise as she said: "You backed him, doctor?"

"Yes, I put a couple of pounds on."

"Then dad is the only one out in the cold."

"Don't be too sure, Miss Pert," he replied.

"You do not mean to say you are on Tattoo?"

"I will confess, now you are all in possession of Tattoo tickets, that I have ten pounds on him."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Essie, and the others laughed heartily.

Round the bend the blue and red cap was still in the lead, and the pace was a cracker. Jack Carr was astonished; he had not expected this. Tattoo was to make the running certainly, but at this rate they were being galloped off their legs.

‘ Confound the young beggar ! he’s trying to cut us all down, I believe. There’s one thing, he will never be able to last at that pace.”

At the back of the course matters did not improve. Tattoo was bounding along in great style, pulling young Swan fairly out of the saddle, and making his arms ache with hanging on. The despised outsider was giving him a much better ride than he expected ; perhaps Dick was right after all, and he would win.

Many backers of Jovial fancied the bay was in front, having forgotten the yellow cap denoted Carr’s mount.

Luke Kearn made no such mistake. If Tattoo could make the running like this, what sort of a chance must Jovial have ? He looked glum, and fixed his glasses on the violet jacket and green sleeves of Cudgewa’s rider.

The favourite was going well, and Hearn was strictly obeying his orders to look after Jovial. He saw Tattoo well ahead, but as Carr made no move, he concluded it was all right.

The Snake was running well, also Plunder and None Nicer. It was a pretty race, the field well together, with the exception of Tattoo, who still kept his place in front.

Pete Wrench looked puzzled, and constantly muttered to himself.

“ What if Dick is right ? ” he said. “ By jingo ! it looks like it. He can’t keep that pace up to the finish. Hang me if he could raise a decent gallop at home.”

They were nearing the far turn, and still the blue jacket and red cap was ahead.

"It's time to make a move," thought Jack Carr. "If he does not fall back, we must go after him."

He waited for a favourable opening, and then sent Jovial ahead.

Hearn followed his lead, and Kearn, as he watched the move, said :

"There will be a change now, I expect."

He was right ; there was a change ; but it was hardly such as he anticipated.

The forward movement of the favourite and Jovial left half the field quickly in the rear. The Snake and None Nicer still held their ground, but Wanderer and Plunder had fallen back.

The sudden spurt lessened the gap between Tattoo and the others, and Essie said :

"Jovial will soon catch him ; see how well he is going !"

Edwin Holt looked through his glasses, and saw Jovial was still full of running ; then he glanced at Tattoo and smiled.

"What do you make of it ?" asked the doctor.

"They'll never catch Tattoo," was the reply.

This was the opinion of many people, and consternation was displayed on their faces. Tattoo had been totally neglected by the general public, who had followed the stable lead, as it was generally thought to be, and backed Jovial.

Lance Loyd's feelings, as he watched the race, can be better imagined than described. He had never

given a thought to Tattoo. Essie Holt had told him Jovial was the best, and she had no reason to deceive him. He believed her in the face of the undoubted superior form Tattoo was showing. How had it come about? All his money was on Jovial; much more than he could afford to lose. Then there was the probability of a scene with Sim Tyne, who would be difficult to convince of his *bonâ-fides* in the matter. At this particular moment the bookmaker was using language unprintable, and declaring he had been done, sold, taken in, robbed, deceived, and so on. If Tattoo won, he'd have it out with Loyd. He'd make it hot for that deceiving young man.

Dick Edgar and Barry Green watched the race closely, and the former from time to time commented upon the running in terms that made his companion boil over with wrath. Barry positively hated the name of Tattoo. Not a copper had he on the despised animal; he had invested a month's wages on Jovial.

"What do you think of him now?" said Dick cheerfully.

"He's a fraud!" grunted Barry.

"He's a good horse; I always told you so," said Dick.

The "I always told you so" rankled in Barry's mind. It suggested superior knowledge on Dick's part, a sort of triumph over him, a reflection upon his handling of Tattoo when he was beaten at Glengarry.

"Much you know about it," said Barry. "He hasn't won yet."

"But he will, and I have backed him."

"You've backed him!" exclaimed Barry.

"Yes; and I'll lend you a few pounds, if you want them, after the race."

"Confound your impudence! I don't want your money."

"I made the suggestion out of kindness," said Dick.

"D—n your kindness! keep it for those who want it."

"Barry, you are losing your temper as well as your money," said Dick.

Barry scowled at his tormentor, but made no reply; he saw Tattoo still galloping gaily along at the head of the field.

"It will be a procession shortly," said Dick joyfully, "and it will be headed by Tattoo."

Barry consigned the horse to perdition, and Dick with it.

Black Tommy did not belie his name as he watched the race. The gloom gradually deepened on his face until he looked savage and sombre. He was seldom short of words to express his feelings, but the sight of Tattoo spread-eagling the field in this fashion rendered him incapable of speech. The torrent of his wrath was still dammed; when it broke loose there would be a rush. Tom Edgar had not only backed Cudgewa heavily, but had "put a saver" on Jovial, and he saw he had an excellent chance of losing all his wagers.

The violet jacket with the green sleeves seemed a

long way off the leader. He blamed Luke Kearn for persuading him Cudgewa was a good thing.

The horses were racing round the bend into the straight. Tattoo was first into the line for home, and a shout reached Harry Swan's ears. Ahead he saw a straight, level green track, and farther down the judges' box. He saw the crowded stands, and the mass of people on various parts of the course.

Tattoo was still pulling hard, and Harry's arms ached painfully, but he meant to hold on to the end. It was evident the horse liked to feel the pressure.

All along the lad had been sanguine of winning ; now he felt it to be a certainty. He had never won the Cup, and it would help him along in his profession if he rode Tattoo to victory. He was sorely tempted to look behind to see where the others were, but he resisted the temptation ; he did not wish to throw a chance away. He thought it strange he could not hear the horses galloping behind him.

Jack Carr was riding a desperate race on Jovial. The horse was game enough, but Tattoo had a big lead. He saw now it was too late, that it was a mistake to allow the pacemaker to get too far away. Mike Hearn also recognised he had blundered, and fallen into the same error as Carr. Cudgewa was still going well, and had he made more use of him in the early part of the race he would have been in a different position.

He must do his best, forlorn as the chance of winning seemed.

He gave Cudgewa a reminder, and the horse answered his call.

Jack Carr saw the green sleeves drawing away from him, and rode Jovial with all his skill and strength. Again he drew level, and the pair galloped along neck and neck.

Both were making up the lost ground, and drew nearer to Tattoo.

The excitement was intense. Tattoo had led all the way. Was he to be beaten in the end?

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-SEVENTH

*"BRED IN THE  
BUSH"*

CUDGEWA made a desperate run. He seemed to come down the track like a whirlwind, and Jovial was soon left behind.

"My favourite is beaten," said Essie, in a disappointed tone; "we have only Tattoo to depend upon."

"And a very good second string he is," said the doctor. "What a pity we had no more on him."

"We ought not to grumble," said Edwin. "We shall be in luck's way if he wins."

The crowds of people on various parts of the course were now thoroughly excited. At the finish of a great race winners and losers alike seem to join in a jubilant shout for the probable victor. Tattoo, the outsider, was beating the favourite, and to judge from appearances at this critical moment, it seemed as though everyone wished him to win. Although it was almost impossible for any horse to make up so much lost ground, Cudgewa ran on with great gameness. It was a heart-breaking task to set him, but he never flinched, and answered Hearn's repeated calls to do his best.

At the distance the gap was considerably reduced, but Tattoo was galloping in fine form.

Tom Edgar, standing scowling at the leader, was almost knocked off his feet by a lad who was running at a great pace, yelling “Tattoo wins!”

To his surprise he saw it was Ben Bent.

The concussion brought Ben to a stand-still, and Tom seized him by the coat collar.

“I’ll shake the life out of you,” he said. “What do you mean by tearing around like a madman?”

“I’ve backed Tattoo,” gasped Ben.

Black Tommy was so amazed he actually stopped shaking him.

“Who told you to back him?” he asked.

“Dick; and I put some of the money you gave me on.”

This was adding insult to injury, and Tom Edgar could have strangled Ben without compunction.

Ben Bent, however, was not the only one yelling “Tattoo wins!” Hundreds of people were shouting his name, and there was not much doubt as to the result. Harry Swan did not lose his head. He was cool, although excited, and felt the thrilling sensation which comes over every jockey when he is on the back of a big winner. He heard the shouts proclaiming the victory of Tattoo; he saw the winning-post a few lengths ahead, and at last he ventured to look back. He was surprised when he noticed the distance Cudgewa was away from him, and Jovial’s colours were still farther in the rear.

“What a win!” chuckled Harry. “Talk about making the running; he’s done it to some tune! I

wonder what they will all say? Anyway, it is not my fault."

He had no cause to feel uneasy for being in the enviable position of allowing his mount to stride along and win. It was not necessary to rouse Tattoo. He was galloping on without a sign of distress, going even better than in the earlier part of the race.

The blue jacket and red cap passed the judge in his box, and Tattoo's number went up directly. Then followed those of Cudgewa and Jovial.

Although the race was a great surprise for Edwin Holt and his friends, he was in the enviable position of having "bred in the bush" the first three horses in the Brisbane Cup. This was a feat worthy to be proud of, and his face glowed with pleasure as he received many congratulations on the result.

"I call it marvellous," said Alan. "This creates a record for Queensland. I wonder what our trainers and breeders will think of it?"

"Glengarry for ever!" shouted the doctor, in his excitement.

Essie was pleased, but there was a touch of disappointment at Jovial's defeat. She soon, however, forgot it, and made the most of Tattoo's victory.

Harry Swan was heartily cheered as he rode the winner in, and there was quite a rush to catch a glimpse of Tattoo.

The horse was perfectly fresh, and Pete Wrench looked at him in amazement. It passed his compre-

hension how a horse that had shown such bad form at Capella came to squander a field in this fashion, and without any apparent effort.

When Harry Swan had weighed in, and came out of the room, he was surrounded by Essie and her friends, all eager to hear what he had to say.

She shook hands with him, and he coloured with pleasure. He thought he had never seen such a pretty girl before.

"Well done, Swan," said Alan. "You rode a capital race."

"You made the running to some purpose," said Edwin Holt, laughing.

"He followed out my instructions admirably," said Pete, making a grimace.

"Always do as you are told," said Dr. Gavin, "especially when you can win."

"Did he tire at all?" asked Pete.

"Tire!" exclaimed the jockey. "He went faster the last half mile than at any part of the race. I never had such an easy ride; he won anyhow."

"It looked like it," remarked the doctor. "I wonder what the dividend is?"

Dick Edgar and Barry Green were standing near, and Essie said:

"You were right after all, Dick; I hope you stuck to your guns."

"I did, Miss Essie; and had a good win, and have some doubles with him," replied Dick.

"What about buying land, eh?" laughed Edwin Holt.

"There'll be sufficient to make a start upon, I hope," replied Dick.

"Is he going to turn squatter?" asked Alan, amused.

"Such is his laudable intention," remarked Dr. Gavin.

"What is the dividend? Does anyone know?" asked Essie.

"A good one. Guess!" said Dick.

"Ten pounds," said Essie.

"More."

"Twelve," said Alan.

"More."

"This is not an auction sale. Out with it," laughed Dr. Gavin.

"Tattoo pays twenty-one pounds ten shillings."

"Bravo!" said Essie. "That is capital; it will clear our losses over Jovial."

"And it's my belief," said Dick, "we have nearly all the tickets."

"Look at them," said Sim Tyne to Lance Loyd. "You mean to tell me you've not been put on the wrong one. They are laughing over their winnings. You've been fooled by a girl, I tell you. Done, sold, smashed up; and you deserve it for being such an ass."

"Shut up," said Lance rudely. "Take your bad luck like a man."

"You tell me to shut up," said Sim angrily, "and that after fooling me as you have done. It's all very well for you; I have to pay when I lose."

Lance Loyd bit his lips to prevent the reply he was about to give. He walked away, and Sim shook his fist after him.

Alan caught sight of the action on the bookmaker's part, and said :

"I thought Tyne had something to do with the backing of Jovial; he looks very angry over his loss."

The irate bookmaker was haranguing a small knot of friends, protesting that the race was a swindle, and that Tattoo was meant to win, and not Jovial.

"I call it a robbery," he said, loud enough for Edwin Holt and the others to hear. "These bush folks ought to be taught they cannot carry on their little games on our courses."

It was seldom Edwin Holt interfered, especially when such men as Sim Tyne gave vent to their feelings; but on this occasion the remarks were passed in a loud voice, and were so utterly unwarrantable that he felt bound to resent them.

He stepped across to Sim Tyne, and said :

"I do not know you, nor have I any desire to make your acquaintance, but let me tell you that what I just heard you say is a lie. When a man tells lies you know what he is called."

Sim Tyne was taken aback. He was a coward when tackled, and Edwin Holt looked dangerous. Still he had to make a reply of some kind to keep up his prestige.

"It was put about that Jovial was your best horse," he said. "I suppose that was done to get

the money on Tattoo. I'll bet a trifle you have scooped the pool on the tote."

This was probably true, as Edwin Holt knew, but he was not at fault, nor did he intend to be put upon by such a man.

"You can think what you please," he said. "I will not deign to argue with you, but let me warn you that if you make any more insulting remarks, I will bring the matter before the stewards, and make you prove your words, which you know is impossible."

Alan Rolt pulled the bookmaker by the sleeve, and said :

"Lance Loyd told you the truth. Jovial was the best at Capella."

"How do you know he told me?" exclaimed Sim.

"I was not certain before, but I am now," replied Alan. "I thank you for the information."

Alan imparted the fact to his sister, and said :

"I hope your estimate of Mr. Loyd has fallen considerably."

"It has," she replied. "You have no occasion to mention his name again to me."

"Milly's made up her mind," he said to himself. "I have put a spoke in Lance Loyd's wheel, and I hope it will remain there."

Lance Loyd met Milly on the lawn soon after the Cup race. He spoke to her, and she answered him, but in such a manner that he knew it was all over with his hopes in that quarter.

He was thoroughly crushed, and, in addition, he

had incurred heavy liabilities which he would be unable to settle. He had a lax conscience, however, and consoled himself with the thought that the *Karumba* would soon sail, and carry him away from his creditors. Edwin Holt was desirous of buying Cudgewa back, and made Kearn an offer for him.

The trainer knew it was a fair bid, but he still thought the horse would win the Moreton Handicap.

He consulted with Tom Edgar, and at last, after a heated argument, he gave a reluctant consent, provided if the horse won they had the stake.

Luke Kearn returned with this reply to Edwin Holt, and after some demur, he agreed to the terms, and the horse was handed over to him, and Pete Wrench took him under his care.

It was decided to put up Harry Swan on Cudgewa in the Handicap, as he had ridden such a good race on Tattoo. The boy was delighted, and thanked Edwin Holt for his kindness.

"You deserve it, my lad," he replied. "No jockey could have ridden Tattoo with more skill, or have more carefully carried out his instructions to the letter," he added, with a smile.

The morning after the Cup the newspapers commented in glowing terms upon the extraordinary success of the three Glengarry horses, all bred in the bush. One writer said it was a great

victory, and the defeat of the local talent was complete.

"I understand," he went on, "the credit of training Tattoo and Jovial entirely belongs to Miss Essie Holt. This charming young lady, who was the cynosure of all eyes at Eagle Farm yesterday, induced her father, the well-known breeder of Glengarry, to allow her to specially prepare the horses for their engagements, with what success we have seen. It may not be generally known that Miss Holt is a splendid horsewoman, and that at home she frequently rides in the gallops, not after the manner of our ladies, but in the far more effective and less dangerous position—astride. An item of news that will interest many of our readers is, that Miss Essie Holt is engaged to be married to Mr. Alan Rolt, of Capella, a gentleman we all admire, and a thoroughgoing all-round sportsman. His future wife, I need hardly add, is sure to join with him in supporting the great game, and it is to be hoped the popular Capella colours will be carried to victory on horses bred at Glengarry."

The news of Alan Rolt's engagement to Essie Holt came as a surprise to many people in Brisbane, and more than one fair lady envied her. Alan's conquests could have been numerous had he so desired.

The announcement that Edwin Holt had purchased Cudgewa was welcome news to all true sportsmen, for in his colours there would

be no doubt of the horse showing his best form.

Luke Kearns was regarded with suspicion, sometimes unjustly, but the fault was his own, for he was guilty of underhand actions which were generally condemned.

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-EIGHTH

*MILLY  
ACCEPTS*

AFTER the experience over starting two horses for the Brisbane Cup, it was decided to send Jovial, Tearaway, and Cudgewa for the Moreton Handicap.

"We are bound to get there or thereabouts with one of them," said Edwin Holt.

"Too many runners out of one stable sometimes upset a good thing," remarked Dr. Gavin.

"I'll risk it," replied Edwin.

"We shall be compelled to back the lot," said the doctor.

"That is hardly necessary. Have a trifle on the one you fancy."

"And which do you like?" he asked.

"Cudgewa."

"Then my money goes on him," said Dr. Gavin.

In the Moreton Handicap, Cudgewa appeared on the track with Harry Swan wearing the blue and yellow cap, which denoted he was the fancied one of the trio.

The public, who like to back recent form, declared on the horse to a man, and he was a warm favourite.

"It will be curious after winning the Brisbane Cup with an outsider if we pull off the Handicap with the favourite," said Essie.

Dick Edgar was anxious for Cudgewa to win, as he had a good double event about him.

Barry Green, having calmed down, condescended to accept a five-pound note out of Dick's winnings on Tattoo, and this he promptly put on Cudgewa. The race needs no description. Cudgewa's victory made the form of Tattoo look even better than ever, and Pete Wrench was more perplexed. The favourite's win was universally popular, and any lingering animosity against Edwin Holt's colours over the victory of Tattoo instead of Jovial were removed.

Tearaway was again started for the last race of the day, and ran second.

"He would have won had he been left out of the Cup," said Pete.

Altogether, the Queensland Turf Club meeting was a brilliant success for Glengarry, and when the party returned to Capella there was much rejoicing in Ipswich and on Alan's estate. The horses were left in Brisbane, and Alan tried to persuade Edwin Holt to let them remain when he returned home.

"You have no race meetings near your place to run them at," he said.

"I thought of having a try at Townsville, Charter's Towers, and Rockhampton; there are good stakes to be won," replied Edwin.

"Can you make up your mind to sell one of them?" asked Alan.

"To you?"

"Yes."

"If you wish; I would not do it for anyone else. Which do you want?"

"Jovial."

Edwin Holt smiled as he replied: "For Essie's sake?"

"Yes."

"He belongs to her; ask her to let you have him."

"I will," replied Alan, and took the first opportunity of doing so.

"Why do you want him?" asked Essie.

"To remind me of you every time I look at him."

"Don't be silly, Alan."

"I see nothing foolish about it," he replied. "Will you do it?"

"If you really wish to have him, I have no objections. He has disappointed me, and I have no regard for him now," she said, smiling.

"And what is the price?"

"No price," she said. "I wish you to accept him as a small present for all your kindness to us."

"That would not be fair," he said.

"But I desire you to take him," she replied.

"If I do, I shall keep him in training until you return to Capella."

"That may be a long time."

"I hope not," he answered. "When are we to be married, Essie? I cannot do without you much longer. It will be very lonely when you are gone."

"We must not think of it yet," she said. "You will have to give me time to become reconciled to leaving Glengarry and dad. Poor dad! I wonder what he will do without me."

"Perhaps he will marry again," said Alan slyly.

"Do you think so?"

"Certainly; he is in the prime of life."

"I am so glad. He will have someone to take care of him." She hesitated, as though she wished to say something more.

"You have not finished," he said. "What are you thinking about?"

"You will laugh at me if I tell you."

"Try me," he replied.

"I fancy dad is very fond of Milly. I wonder if she likes him," said Essie.

"I am sure she does," he answered.

"But he is much older."

"Therefore the better able to take care of her," replied Alan.

"Would you like him to marry her?"

"I should, indeed; no one more so. Your father would be an admirable husband for her."

"Would it not be funny? She would be my step-mother," laughed Essie.

"But you have no occasion to be alarmed at that. Glengarry is a long way from Capella," he said.

"Oh, I should not be afraid of her. Milly and I are very good friends indeed."

"We must do our best to make a match of it," said Alan, smiling.

"Better leave them alone," replied Essie. "Dad's not shy."

Alan laughed heartily at her remark, and said :

"Then you think he will have the courage to ask Milly ?"

"I am sure of it; and I have noticed signs which indicate he will not be long about it."

Essie's surmise proved correct. Edwin Holt was anxious to return to Glengarry, and desirous of ascertaining Milly's feelings towards himself before he left.

Alan assured him there was nothing between his sister and Lance Loyd.

"It was a mild flirtation of which I did not approve," he said; "but it is all over. Milly regards his conduct over the races as unworthy of a gentleman. She told me she quietly crushed him when he spoke to her at Eagle Farm, and I know what that means. She can be very chilly at times."

"That is not encouraging," said Edwin.

"There is no fear of her being frigid with you."

"I hope not, for I want to ask her a very important question, and, if possible, get a favourable answer."

"I think she will be inclined to grant any request you may ask."

"That is encouraging," replied Edwin. "Have you any objections to my asking her to be my wife?"

"None at all. On the contrary, I shall be

delighted if she accepts you. Essie was right, after all," he replied, with a laugh.

"What has the young minx been saying?" asked her father.

"That it would not be long before you proposed to Milly. She said she had observed certain signs which indicated such an intention on your part."

Edwin Holt laughed as he replied: "She is a very observant young lady."

"Very," replied Alan.

"I must read her a lecture on the impropriety of too closely studying the movements of her father," said Edwin.

"If Milly accepts your offer, as I feel sure will be the case," said Alan, "I wish you to make me a promise."

"What is it?"

"That you will marry her as soon as you can obtain her consent to fix the date—the earlier the better," said Alan.

"That is very easy to promise," said Edwin; "and I fancy I detect a selfish motive in the request. The sooner I marry your sister, the more readily will Essie give her consent. Is that how it stands?"

"You have summed up the situation admirably," said Alan, laughing.

Milly Rolt knew Edwin Holt was in love with her, and she gravely considered what the consequences would be. She regarded him as a probable husband from every standpoint, and summed up in his favour.

She was not actually in love with him, but she felt a sincere regard for him, and was sure this would lead her on towards a more ardent affection. Essie believed that love was everything in marriage, and she was probably right. Milly had not such a loving nature as her friend; she was older, and had seen more of life, and been brought in contact with many different phases of it. She contrasted Edwin Holt with Lance Loyd, and wondered how she ever found pleasure in a passing flirtation with the latter. She knew she had never felt the same towards Lance Loyd as she did towards Edwin Holt. Probably her brother's antipathy towards Loyd had much to do with her championship of him. She thought Alan had no right to interfere in such matters, but she acknowledged his estimate of her quondam friend was just.

She was very fond of Essie. She liked Glengarry, and if Alan married her friend, and she became the wife of Edwin Holt, the ties between them all would be closer than ever. It was an excellent family arrangement, and meant an exchange of places with Essie, who would come to Capella, while she would take her place at Glengarry. The loneliness of the life did not frighten her, and there was the probability of a frequent interchange of visits between Capella and Glengarry. She had argued herself into a frame of mind favourable to Edwin Holt, when he opportunely made his appearance.

He was not long in making it perfectly clear to her why he had sought her out. He pleaded his

cause manfully, and placed before her the advantages and disadvantages of his proposal.

"I need hardly assure you, Milly," he said, "that I love you, and have done so ever since I first saw you. I am a much older man, perhaps, than you anticipated marrying, but I feel young and active, and I trust have many years of life before me. I am healthy, and Dr. Gavin will tell you he would be ruined if all his patients were as sound as myself. I am well-off—it is no use denying a fact—and I can give you a good home, such as you have been accustomed to. Glengarry is a lonely place compared to Capella, but it was with satisfaction I noticed when you were there that you were interested in all you saw, and did not appear to lack occupation. When your brother marries Essie, the old place will be blank until I have someone to take her place—I hope and trust it will be yourself. You may think me a prosaic lover, but my feelings towards you are ardent, and I long to make you my wife. We can be very happy together, I am sure, if you will honour me by accepting my proposal."

Edwin Holt could not have taken a surer way to gain his object than by addressing Milly in such a sensible way. She did not expect from him the rhapsodies of a young lover. His sensible, kind, and convincing proposal appealed to her; he spoke in the same strain in which she had argued with herself. This proved they regarded a probable marriage between them in the same light. In answering him, she frankly confessed that she did

not love him as he might wish, but she added that she was certain it would grow and develop, because she honoured and respected him.

"I admire you for the plain, straightforward way in which you have spoken," she said. "If you think it will be for our mutual happiness to marry, I will accept your proposal."

"I am sure it will," he said earnestly, delighted at his success.

"Then I will be your wife," said Milly quietly.

Edwin Holt bent over her and kissed her, and Milly, looking into his face, said with a bright smile :

"I think love has already joined hands with esteem."

He kissed her again, and said, as he held both her hands :

"I am very happy, Milly, and consider myself the most fortunate of men. Do you know what Alan says?" he added, smiling.

"Does he know?"

"Oh, yes; he received a hint from Essie, who pretended she was quite aware of my intentions regarding you."

Milly laughed as she replied :

"She has been taking observations, with excellent results. What was Alan's remark?"

"He hoped we would marry quickly."

"In order that he may convince Essie it is necessary to his happiness that she should consent to an early wedding," laughed Milly.

"He acknowledged such was his intention. What reply am I to give him?" asked Edwin Holt.

"Tell him," said Milly, "it rests with himself. When he convinces Essie, I shall be quite ready to fall in with her views."

"In that case, I shall urge him to lose no time in bringing matters to a speedy conclusion," said Edwin.

CHAPTER  
TWENTY-NINTH

*THE DOCTOR  
DISCOURSES*

It was arranged that Essie and her father should return to Glengarry, and remain there until the following year, when the weddings were to take place, soon after Christmas, at Ipswich.

Edwin Holt and his daughter had been away from Glengarry for some weeks, and their return was anxiously looked forward to.

Digary Dodd received due notice of their intended arrival, and was exceedingly anxious to hear all about the victory of Tattoo. He thought he had lost his money on Jovial, but was heartily glad one of the Glengarry horses won the Cup.

As usual he reserved the best seats on his coach for them, and Essie mounted on the box, delighted at the prospect of soon being at her beloved Glengarry again.

She commenced to chaff Digary about his loss over Jovial, and said :

"Tattoo surprised us all. He is a regular old rogue and no one had any faith in him except Dick."

"Lucky fellow," muttered Digary. "I expect he had a good win."

"I believe so ; and he is going to buy land and turn out for himself," replied Essie.

"Well, he's a smart chap, and I hope he will get on," said Digary.

"You forget, Essie, I fancied Tattoo had a chance," said her father, smiling.

"So you did," she answered.

"And Digary will be delighted to hear I put him some money on."

"Don't come that game; I am quite satisfied I lost on Jovial," said Dodd.

"I backed Jovial for you as well," said Edwin. "You had three pounds on each, and the dividend on Tattoo was twenty-one pounds ten shillings. Now do you feel better?"

"Do you mean it?" said the delighted driver, whose loss was suddenly converted into a win of some magnitude.

"Certainly; and you shall have a cheque as soon as we arrive home."

As they neared Glengarry they saw all the hands assembled to greet them, and there was a hearty cheer as the coach pulled up. They cheered for Edwin Holt and Miss Essie, and then gave a rousing one for Tattoo. The win had been duly celebrated when Digary Dodd brought the news, and a regular spree took place, which lasted the better part of a week.

Edwin Holt found everything had gone on well during their absence, and Lydia was quickly at work looking round to see how matters had fared in the house.

Dr. Gavin came on with them from Cumberland,

and was determined to get an answer from Lydia one way or the other.

"You know, I rather fancied you were hankering after Lydia," he said ; and Edwin Holt laughed as he replied :

"Perhaps I had some such idea at one time, but Milly drove it clean out of my head."

"Now the coast is clear, and you have decided upon Miss Rolt, I shall have another try for Lydia," replied the doctor.

"And I wish you every success," said Edwin. "She will make you an excellent wife, and her knowledge of hospital work ought to be a great help to you."

In due course the horses arrived safely, in charge of Dick and Barry, Jovial remaining behind. Tattoo was the hero of the hour. He was surrounded by admirers, and many were the comments passed about his beauty and wonderful galloping powers.

"It is all very well to be knowing after the event," said Dick. "I took the precaution to be wise before it, and benefited accordingly."

"Dick had a very good win," said Barry, "and I am sure he will stand a big 'shout' for you all. He's a generous lad, so he is, and deserves it. Look what he gave me," and Barry pulled out a wonderful knife, containing all manner of strange things, for which he had no possible use. Still, the more there was on it the better he liked it, and pondered over the various uses of the contents, some of which puzzled him sorely.

"You'll be able to cut trees down with that, Barry."

"Bury it, old fellow; it will come in handy some day for making your coffin."

"Fix a chain to it and hang it round your neck."

"Don't drop it on the track, or it may upset Dodd's coach."

Such were some of the remarks which caused Barry to beat a retreat with his precious possession.

When Dick Edgar counted his winnings, and added them to his savings, he found he had a very respectable sum, and asked Edwin Holt's advice as to the purchase of some land.

"I shall be sorry to lose you," said Edwin. "Cannot we fix up something near here? I have more land than I know what to do with; if you care to purchase some, I will let you have it at a reasonable price, and you can take your own time to pay for it. There's a nice block not far from Cumberland, and as the land there is fertile, you can go in for a bit of fruit and vegetable growing. It will pay you well."

Dick hardly knew how to thank him. This was more than he expected, and he said if he accepted the offer, Edwin Holt must always command his services whenever required.

"That is why I want you near here—selfish, is it not?" said Edwin.

"Not at all. I think you have a right to ask it, after all you have done, and are going to do for me."

"I am to be married early next year," said Edwin.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dick. "Who is the fortunate lady?"

"The lady is Miss Rolt, and I am the fortunate man to have won her," said Edwin.

"And she will come to Glengarry, and Miss Essie will go to Capella?"

"That's it," replied Edwin.

"We shall all miss her very much," said Dick. "There's no one to compare with Miss Essie around here."

"She has won all hearts, I think," said her father proudly; and Dick agreed such was the case.

Dick Edgar took Barry into his confidence over his intention to purchase land.

"Where shall you pitch your camp?" said Barry. "If you go away back, there will be a lot of clearing to be done. You'll find it a tougher job than this, and there'll be no money in it for a long time. I'd advise you to think twice over it before you cut adrift from Glengarry."

Dick then told him what Edwin Holt had suggested, and Barry said that placed the whole thing in a very different light.

"It's just like the boss—he's the best sort I ever knew; he's always helping someone, and he's never happy unless he is doing a good turn. If you take that land near the township you'll soon make a lot of money. I know it well, and take my advice, it is one of the best tracts for rearing horses on we have. Get

hold of one of the Glengarry horses, and a few good mares, and in half-a-dozen years you won't know where you are," said Barry.

"I wish I could buy Tattoo," said Dick.

"That's not likely, after what he has done, but you might get him for a couple of seasons."

"I think I'll ask about it when I am settled down."

"Do it at once," was Barry's advice.

"I hear my father has fixed on a place for you," said Essie to Dick. "You will be glad to be near Glengarry. I wish I was not going so far away from the old place."

"I expect you'll feel it at first," said Dick, "but I hope you will be very happy."

"Thank you, Dick; I am sure I shall. And I ought not to feel sorrowful about going away, but I do love the old place, and everyone, and everything about it. When you have a home of your own you will feel as I do. It is better to be born a man. He does not leave his home when he is married; he brings someone into it to make him increase his love for it."

"I think it the best thing that ever happened to you to be born your father's daughter," said Dick.

"You are right; and although I shall be at Capella, my thoughts will wander to Glengarry."

"And no doubt you and Mr. Rolt will often be here."

"I hope so; and I shall be able to see how you are getting on," said Essie.

"Barry says the land your father proposes to let

me have is the best on the station for breeding horses on."

"I know it is good," replied Essie, "but it may not be the best. However, Barry ought to know."

"I want to ask Mr. Holt to do me a favour, but I hardly like to broach the subject," said Dick.

"Can I help you?" asked Essie.

"I am sure you can, if you will."

"What do you require?"

"I wonder if your father would lease, or sell, Tattoo to me."

"Is that it?" laughed Essie. "You do not care to part with your favourite. I think you deserve him, for you never lost faith in him from the time he won that trial," said Essie.

"Then you will speak to your father about it?"

"Yes; but is it not rather early in the day? You have not taken up the land yet.

"It will encourage me if I know old Tattoo is going with me."

"If it lies in my power, you shall have him," said Essie; at which promise he was delighted.

She mentioned his request to her father, who said:

"I do not think I ought to part with him after what he has done."

"You have so many horses that you will never miss him," replied Essie.

"I'll think it over," he replied; and Essie knew it was as good as settled in Dick's favour.

Edwin Holt rode over with Dick to look at the land he proposed he should take. The river ran

down one side of it, and most of the paddocks were fenced in.

"You will have to build a shanty to live in," said Edwin. "When you get on, you can put up a proper homestead; but I would not launch out too much at first, until you see how you like it, and what prospects you have of succeeding."

"There is plenty of timber about," replied Dick, "and I shall not want much of a place to live in."

"Not until you are married," laughed Edwin.

"That day is a long way off," replied Dick.

"So you imagine; but it may come quicker than you expect. One can never account for these things."

After going over the greater portion of the selection, they went into Cumberland, and called at Dr. Mashin's.

For a wonder they found him at home, and he was very pleased to see them.

"How's business?" said Edwin Holt.

"Awful; I never knew such a district for healthy people," said the doctor. "There has not been an epidemic here within the memory of the oldest inhabitant."

Edwin Holt laughed, and Dr. Gavin said:

"It is no laughing matter, I assure you. I think of changing my quarters. I mean to advertise for a suitable practice, and state as an indispensable qualification that the district must be very unhealthy."

"Ah!" exclaimed Edwin Holt, "there is a reason for this."

"There is," said the doctor. "I am being starved out."

"That is not the reason I mean," said Edwin. "Have you put the question, doctor?"

"Eh?"

"Have you asked Miss Barker?"

"I have, for the sixth time, and she declines to become Mrs. Mashin. I call it flying in the face of Providence, when she knows there is no chance of obtaining you."

"She will give way in the end," said Edwin.

"But the end is far off," said the doctor.

"I must speak to her about it," replied Edwin. "She fails to appreciate your devotion. She does not know what she is losing."

"You can tell her from me I am losing my practice through her; I cannot attend to my patients for thinking about her. When I am not at Glengarry, my thoughts are," said Dr. Gavin.

"I understood you had no patients—that the district was abominably healthy," laughed Edwin.

"So it is, thanks to me. I am too straightforward. I found Cumberland in an unsanitary condition, and induced the inhabitants to cleanse it and purify themselves. The consequences to me are disastrous."

"But not to the inhabitants," said Edwin Holt.

"They are an ungrateful people," replied the doctor. "This is what comes of doing good to one's fellow-creatures."

"They appreciate all you have done, I am sure," said Edwin, smiling. He knew the doctor's ways, and they amused him.

"I cannot live on appreciation," replied Dr. Gavin.

"You would find it hard to live without it," said Edwin.

"So I should, so I should," replied the doctor quickly. "You are always right, Holt."

"And you will find everything will come right in the end. Try her again."

"For the seventh time," groaned the doctor.

"There's luck in odd numbers," replied Edwin, laughing. "By-the-bye, you are to have a new neighbour."

"A possible customer?" asked the doctor cheerfully, rubbing his hands.

"I don't know. Look at him!" said Edwin, as he pointed to Dick. "He is about to take up some land of mine close to the township."

Dr. Gavin sank into a chair, and said, with a ludicrous air of melancholy resignation:

"Upon my word, this beats all! It is a standing menace to ill-health for anyone to look at him."

CHAPTER  
THIRTIETH

*BARRY SUCCEEDS  
DIGARY*

GLENGARRY had a new mistress. Milly Holt had exchanged places with Essie, who was now Mrs. Alan Rolt of Capella, and Edwin Holt was prosperous and happy.

The weddings took place, as arranged, at Ipswich, amidst great rejoicings, and it was acknowledged that two fairer brides had never been seen in the church.

Essie and Alan went on a tour to Sydney, Melbourne, and Tasmania. Everything was new to her, and the large southern cities seemed marvellous places to the bush-bred young bride.

Alan was amused and interested at the pleasure and curiosity she manifested in everything. They were away for three months, and then returned to settle down at Capella.

Edwin Holt and his wife journeyed as far as Sydney with them, and then went to the Blue Mountains, where they spent several weeks amidst the glorious, romantic scenery surrounding the Jenolan caves.

On their return to Glengarry, Dick Edgar, who had, with Barry Green, been in command during Edwin Holt's absence, left to take up the land

purchased near Cumberland. He set to work with a will, and engaged several good hands to help him. In a couple of years he had transformed the place, and there was every prospect of his doing well.

Edwin Holt allowed him to take Tattoo, on the condition that he sent a certain number of selected mares every season. Dick was very proud of his stud horse, and Tattoo had a special box built for him, and a large paddock attached to it, fenced in. Here the Brisbane Cup winner lived at his ease. He was regularly exercised by Dick, who rode him about his place, and thus kept him in good condition.

It soon became evident to Dick that Barry Green's opinion was correct, and Holt Farm, as he called it, had already reared a number of good horses. Instead of taking two or three trips a year to Brisbane, Edwin Holt now sent his horses with Dick Edgar's, and he found it paid him quite as well.

Tom Edgar, when he heard his nephew was succeeding in life, tried to tempt him to renew business relations, and stable the horses he brought down at his place.

Dick, however, declined with thanks. He had no desire to be mixed up with Black Tommy, or any of his dealings. He found his uncle's business had declined, but was certain it could be worked up again if properly managed, and with a man in charge who could be trusted by all classes of customers.

On his return to Glengarry, after a visit to Brisbane, he mentioned a scheme to Edwin Holt for

taking over the stables belonging to Tom Edgar, if he was willing to sell out at a reasonable figure.

"There is a lot of money in it," said Dick, "and it would be handy for our shipments. We should want a reliable man in charge. How do you think Barry Green would do?"

"I think your plan is feasible," said Edwin Holt, "and I am quite willing to go in with you as a speculation. As to Barry being in charge, I doubt if he would be able to undertake it alone. He is a very good man to work under someone, but left to himself, I am afraid he would lose his head; it would be too much for him. I think I have a better man to propose, if we can induce him to take the position, provided we make a deal with Edgar. Barry could go as second in command, and in such a capacity he would be very useful."

"Who is the man?" asked Dick.

"Digary Dodd."

"The very man for it, if we can persuade him to give up the coaching," said Dick enthusiastically.

"I do not think anyone will get the better of Dodd, if it comes to a sharp deal in horse-flesh," said Edwin Holt, smiling.

Dick made a special journey to Brisbane to open up negotiations with his uncle. It was a difficult matter to approach him, and he first mentioned his business to Luke Kearn.

The trainer said it would be a good thing for Edgar if he sold out before the stables had a worse name.

"He neglects the place, and drinks heavily," said Luke. "He will not get much for his business now, and if he hangs on to it, in a couple of years it will be worth nothing. He does not make a living there."

"Then you think he will sell?" asked Dick.

"If he has a good offer; but he'll want more than it is worth. You had better let me transact the business for you; I doubt if he would sell to you at any price."

Dick thought this probable, and so left the matter to the trainer.

In the course of a week he told Dick he had induced Tom Edgar to fix a price, but had not mentioned who was to be the purchaser.

"He thinks I want it," laughed Luke, "but he is very much mistaken."

Eventually, after some haggling, the bargain was concluded. The money was paid over by Luke Kearn, and the legal documents were afterwards handed to Dick Edgar.

When Black Tommy found out who had purchased the business, his wrath knew no bounds. His nephew had turned the tables on him in a very summary fashion, and he bitterly resented it. He quarrelled with Luke Kearn, and went on a carouse, which tended to end most disastrously, for after a month's debauch he was taken to the hospital in a very bad state.

The purchase completed, Dick went home, and then Edwin Holt tried his hand on Digary Dodd.

As usual, Dodd halted his coach at Glengarry, and Lydia Barker, who was still there, saw he was well looked after.

Having enjoyed a better repast than usual, Digary felt comfortable, and in a good humour with all mankind. He even went so far as to bestow a donation upon the Chinaman cook, an appreciation of his culinary efforts which completely overwhelmed Johnnie.

Having arranged for the humouring of Digary Dodd, and finding everything satisfactory and suitable for his purpose, Edwin Holt broached the subject of relinquishing coach driving.

"Have you ever thought of giving up driving?" he asked. "You must be about tired of it."

"I am very fond of driving," said Dodd. "Besides, it's my living, and there is no chance of giving it up."

"There is a chance, if you care to take it," said Edwin.

"Depends what it is, and who makes the offer."

"I make the offer; is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, of course it is."

"And the chance is to take over the management of a big livery stables in Brisbane, which I have purchased in conjunction with Dick Edgar. The place would just suit you, and provide you with an occupation to your liking."

"I don't fancy giving up the coach," said Digary. "I have lived on the box seat so many years that I have fairly taken root there, and it will be a wrench to give it up."

"You will never make much money driving the coach," said Edwin; "but as our manager you will draw a good salary, and have a commission. All our horses will be sent to you for sale, and I can tell you there is a good deal of profit hanging to it."

"And what's the screw?" asked Digary.

"Four hundred a year, five per cent. commission on the profits, and house rent free," said Edwin Holt.

Digary Dodd opened his eyes at this liberal offer.

"I'll take it on," he said; "but the blessed mail service will go to the dogs."

Edwin Holt laughed as he said:

"They will find someone to take your place, although we all know there is only one Digary Dodd, and his fame in Queensland as a coach driver will never die."

Dick Edgar was very glad Digary Dodd had accepted the post of manager, and he was to take up his duties in three months' time.

"It's this way," said Digary. "I don't want to hand the horses over to a fool. We have been good pals, and if I thought some duffer was going to 'buse them, I'd throw up this new job. It will take the best part of three months to find a man worth his salt."

Barry Green heard from Dick how things were being arranged. Somehow he did not care for the prospect of being second in command to Digary Dodd. He had experienced the fiery nature of the coach driver's temperament, and knew such outbreaks were frequent.

Barry was observed to ponder deeply, and appeared to be turning things over in his mind.

"There is something wrong with Barry," said Milly. "Is he ill?"

"I have not noticed him," replied Edwin. "I'll ask him."

He did; and Barry confessed he was in a quandary.

"Can I assist you out of it?" said Edwin.

"I want to oblige you and Dick, and do as you wish," replied Barry, "but I don't fancy tackling that job with Digary Dodd. We'd never agree; it would be a perpetual war of words, and it might come to a fight."

Edwin Holt laughed as he said:

"Then you prefer to remain here, if I agree to it."

"Not that exactly," said Barry.

"You do not want to leave Glengarry?"

"No, it's not that exactly either," said Barry.

"Then what is it you exactly wish to do?" asked Edwin, smiling.

"Digary Dodd is giving up the coach. I'd like to take on the driving of the mail, if I got the chance," said Barry.

Edwin Holt knew Barry would be the very man for the work, for he was a good driver, sober and reliable.

"I think I can arrange that for you," he said, much to Barry's joy.

"And you are not offended with me?" asked Barry.

"Not at all. We want a good driver in Digary's place, and you are the very man for it."

When Digary Dodd heard Barry wished to take his place, he said :

"I'm glad of it. I have no objections to handing my team over to him ; he knows how to drive, and he will treat the horses well."

Thus it came about that Barry Green became as well known as Digary Dodd in the capacity of driver of the mail, and the passengers found his temper more even than that of his predecessor. As for Digary, he succeeded in working Tom Edgar's business up into a very satisfactory condition in a shorter time than was expected.

The horse-dealing fraternity found Digary a very hard nut to crack, and soon gave up trying their tricks on him.

At Capella Essie lived happily, and her joy, as the mother of two fine boys, was unlimited. Glengarry was often in her thoughts, but with Alan and her children she was perfectly contented.

Edwin Holt was delighted with his grandsons, and when they were at Glengarry the house was kept merry.

Milly had no children, and lavished her affections on her nephews. The boys called her Auntie Milly, and they asked sundry amusing questions as to why auntie's husband was their grandfather.

"If Auntie Milly has any little boys, will they have the same grandfather we have ?" was somewhat of a puzzle that young Alan asked his mother.

Dr. Gavin tried to induce Lydia to change her mind, for the seventh time, and succeeded.

"I told you there was luck in odd numbers," laughed Edwin Holt. "When is it to be?"

"To that most important question I can get no satisfactory reply," said the doctor.

"More delay, eh?" asked Edwin.

"I am afraid so. Hope deferred maketh my heart sad."

"You do not look very gloomy," said Edwin.

"I keep up a cheerful countenance, but inwardly I am raging with impatience," replied the doctor.

Alan Rolt was much taken up with some of Tattoo's stock, and purchased a couple of colts from Dick Edgar.

"How is Jovial doing at Capella?" asked Dick.

"Better than he did on the turf; he is a success at the stud," replied Alan.

"Then Tattoo and Jovial are likely to keep up the fame of our horses that are 'Bred in the Bush,'" said Edwin Holt.

THE END



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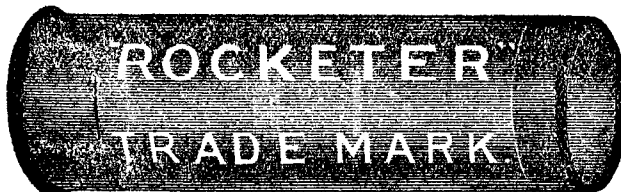
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